

AN ELIZABETHAN
STORY-BOOK

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*FAMOUS TALES FROM THE PALACE
OF PLEASURE*

SELECTED AND ARRANGED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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TO MY STUDENTS
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INTRODUCTION

APART from its general interest as an Elizabethan magazine of fiction, the present collection of tales from William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* will, it is hoped, enable the student of English literature to recognise what is most original in some of the most famous Elizabethan plays. It is a vulgar error to attach much importance to the particular pattern of a play formed by change of situation and the march of events. For the lover of literature the outline of the story is the least important aspect of a play or a novel. That, I take it, is the point of Dr. Johnson's remark to Erskine, comparing the novels of Richardson and Fielding. "Sir, there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's, than in all *Tom Jones*." Erskine objected that he found Richardson very tedious, doubtless because he tried to read him for the story. "Why, sir," said Dr. Johnson, "if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment."

The plots of Elizabethan playwrights rarely display originality. The greatest of them, Shakespeare and Marlowe and Webster, appear to have troubled themselves very little about probability, provided that the action was sufficiently striking. Shakespeare is as extravagant as any contemporary in

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staging far-fetched situations and incredible events. Many of his plays, if their plots are sketched in outline, appear grotesque or absurd. What business man in his senses, for instance, would borrow a large sum of money and offer a pound of his own flesh as a security? Or what Jew would lend it on such terms? Is it conceivable that a great king would divide his kingdom into three parts, and, prior to his abdication, bestow the richest part upon the daughter who professed to love him most?

Provided we suspend our disbelief and grant the playwright his premises, our interest in poetry and character and conflict outweighs all curiosity to learn the issue of the action. Indeed, the issue of the action is often familiar to most of us beforehand.

Some of the moderns are, in this respect, no less faulty than Shakespeare. The plot of Oscar Wilde's comedy, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, turns on the heroine's entire ignorance of her mother's identity after a separation of twenty years. The daughter has been brought up in the society of her mother's old friends, and, having married a wealthy nobleman, affords a tempting chance for her mother, Mrs. Erlynne, to regain her social status. But an assumed name would hardly be a sufficient disguise for a woman once so conspicuous in society as Mrs. Erlynne. We are required to believe that nobody recognises her again, despite the fact that on two memorable occasions she has been the talk of all fashionable London and the chief target for scandal. And, dazzled and delighted as we are by a dialogue scintillating with Wilde's paradoxes and persiflage, we willingly comply. George Meredith insists upon our willing compliance in the well-known dictum on

comedy in his Prelude to *The Egoist*. "Credulity is not wooed through the impressionable senses ; nor have we recourse to the small circular glow of the watchmaker's eye to raise in bright relief minutest grains of evidence for the routing of incredulity." The "argument" of a play is, in one sense, as irrelevant to its artistic value as the plot of an opera.

It follows that the student of Elizabethan drama must make some attempt to separate a play from its sources. In his reading of Shakespeare he must recognise clearly what is Shakespeare's original work as distinct from what is borrowed from Holinshed or Plutarch or Painter. The confusion of a play with its source is often the cause of mistaken criticism. In a letter to the late A. B. Walkley, prefixed to *Man and Superman*, Mr. George Bernard Shaw, for example, expresses his unbounded admiration for Helena, the lady doctor in *All's Well that Ends Well*. He calls her an early Ibsenite heroine, but the credit of the conception belongs rather to Bandello than to Shakespeare.

The quintessence of the Elizabethan dramatists is only revealed to us after we have subtracted the materials borrowed from the histories and story-books. John M. Synge gets close to what is raciest and most characteristic in the old plays when he puts forward his interesting theory of their poetry in the Preface to his *Playboy of the Western World*. "There is little doubt," he says, "that in the happy age of literature, striking and beautiful phrases were as ready to the story-teller's or the playwright's hand, as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time. It is probable that when the Elizabethan dramatist took his ink-horn and sat down to his work he used many phrases

that he had just heard, as he sat at dinner, from his mother or his children." Shaw's *Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, introducing William Shakespeare, his tablets in his hand, industriously setting down the *obiter dicta* of soldiers and courtiers and passers-by, provides a most convincing explanation of the more vital sources of the great plays.

The mediæval dramatists drew their plots from the Scriptures or from the legends of the saints. In their eyes the mere notion of inventing the fable would have amounted to heresy. In obedience to this tradition, the Elizabethans did not scruple to borrow freely from all the histories and collections of tales that happened to be available. The largest and most popular of such collections was *The Palace of Pleasure* by William Painter, which finally comprised a hundred stories.

William Painter was probably born in Kent about the year 1525, and received his education at St. John's College, Cambridge. For some years he was headmaster of Sevenoaks School. In 1561 he was appointed to the post of Clerk of the Ordnance in the Tower of London under the Earl of Warwick. To Warwick he dedicated *The Palace of Pleasure*, and the famous device of the bear and ragged staff adorns the title-page of the first edition of 1566. Painter narrowly escaped imprisonment for peculation. It appears that he had gunpowder and other munitions conveyed from Windsor to the Tower, and afterwards entered them in his accounts as freshly purchased. Warwick possibly shared in the transaction and doubtless for this reason Painter was suffered to retain his post. He remained in office until his death in 1594.

The First Tome of his collection of tales, containing sixty stories, was published by William Jones in 1566. A Second Tome, consisting of thirty-four tales, appeared about eighteen months later. This was followed in 1569 by another edition of the First Tome, containing additional matter ; and the whole work, now consisting of one hundred tales, was reprinted in the second edition of 1575. This was most accurately reprinted by Joseph Haslewood in a very limited edition published in three volumes in 1813, and again by Joseph Jacobs in three handsome volumes published in 1890.

Painter's greatest merits are his industry and astonishingly wide reading. He was practically the first to introduce the work of the great Italian novelists into this country. *The Palace of Pleasure* comprises for the most part translations of tales by the great *novellieri*, Boccaccio, Bandello and Queen Margaret of Navarre, but a detailed classification of the sources made by the late Sir Sidney Lee will convey a more adequate impression of Painter's curious learning. According to Lee, "three stories (i. 6, 7, ii. 1) are derived from Herodotus ; three from Ælian (i. 8-10) ; three from Plutarch (i. 27-8, ii. 3) ; thirteen from Aulus Gellius (i. 14-26) ; six from Livy (i. 1-4, ii. 6, 8) ; one from Tacitus (ii. 14) ; three from Quintus Curtius (i. 12-13, ii. 2). Among Italian writers, no less than twenty-six came from Bandello, either directly or through the French translations of Belleforest or Boiaistuau du Launay (i. 11, 40-6, ii. 4-5, 7, 9-10, 21-30, 32-3, 35). Sixteen came from Boccaccio (i. 30-9, ii. 16-20, 31) ; two each from Cinthio's *Ecatomithi* (ii. 11, 15) and from Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's *Pecorone* (i. 5, 48) ;

one each from Pedro di Messia's *Selva di varie Lezzioni* (i. 29), Straparola (i. 49), Masuccio's *Novellino*, through the French *Comptes du Monde Avantureux* (i. 66); Guevara's *Letters* (ii. 12); and *Pausanias and Manitius* (ii. 13). Sixteen are from Queen Margaret's *Heptameron* (i. 50-65). The second edition included (ii. 34) a translation from the Latin of Nicholas Moffa's (or à Moffa's) account of the death of the Sultan Solyman, which Painter completed in 1557."

It may be a matter for wonder that this epoch-making work has not been made more accessible to the student, not to mention the general reader. The true explanation is that the literary and professorial Podsnaps of an earlier generation feared that Painter's tales were "calculated to call a blush into the cheek of a young person." It is not many years ago since critics and scholars were bold enough to quote the full title of John Ford's fine play '*Tis Pity She's a Whore*. William Painter, it is true, included many stories of seduction and adultery he found in the volumes of the *novellieri*. It is a notable fact that he omitted the most licentious ones. In these days that have witnessed the popular revival of plays like *The Way of the World* and stage shows like *The Beggar's Opera*, it is hardly necessary to put forward an apology with a selection of Painter's stories. Indecency is the last charge we can justly bring against them. They are before all things sensational. But a keen appetite for sensational incident is precisely the impulse that gives the Elizabethan stage its "form and pressure." From first to last, all the dramatists of that age vied with one another in their efforts to excite rare emotions and exploit unheard-of

crimes. Marlowe's *Faustus*, a typical child of the Renaissance, was prepared to go to Hell for the sake of a new sensation. To try the temper of his noble Duchess of Malfy and reveal "man's unconquerable mind," John Webster introduces the most horrible tortures into his great tragedy. The worst of all, perhaps, is the band of raving madmen, a cruelty "never practised till that hour." Romeo in Painter's novel is described as a lover without parallel for the ardour and intensity of his passion.

A hunger for exciting action, an insatiable desire to tell of unheard-of cruelties and unprecedented crimes, frequently prompted Painter's choice of story. But a love of sensation is a characteristic of story-tellers from the beginnings of time. The desperate expedient used by Helena to conquer her husband's unkindness in our first story is not more bizarre than the incident at the Wessex fair in Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge*. Michael Henchard, the hero, actually offers his wife for sale by auction, and knocks her down to a passing sailor for the sum of five guineas. Thomas Hardy, more than any other great modern writer, emulates the Elizabethans in audacity of incident. The shocking sacrifice of Virginia, in Painter's selection from *Livy*, is no more overpowering than the closing scene in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, when Angel Clare, the heroine's former lover, arrives at the prison just in time to see the black flag hoisted to signal the cruel death of the ill-starred girl. Painter's account of the marriage of the Duchess of Malfy and its dreadful sequel may remind the reader of the miserable deaths of Jude's unhappy children in *Jude the Obscure*.

It is intended that the use of modern spelling in

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reprinting the present collection will make the book more attractive to the general reader. No editor who prepared a popular edition of the Tudor poets or dramatists would dream of keeping the eccentric spellings of the original text. The ancient spellings are worse than useless, save for the philologist or the textual critic.

No change has been made in Painter's vocabulary, which shows a profusion of "ink-horn terms," or in his syntax, which is closely modelled upon his French sources.

Our text is taken from the careful edition of Haslewood, reprinted, and compared with the 1575 edition, by Jacobs. The selection includes some of the longest, and, from the student's point of view, the most important tales in the collection. The following table shows their sources together with the Elizabethan plays derived from them:—

TITLE	SOURCE	DRAMATISED VERSION
<i>Giletta of Narbonne</i>	Boccaccio's <i>Decamerone</i> , iii. 9	Shakespeare's <i>All's Well</i>
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Bandello, ii. 9	" <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<i>Coriolanus</i>	Livy, ii. 35 seq.	" <i>Coriolanus</i> (with Plutarch's version)
<i>Appius and Virginia</i>	<i>Ibid.</i> , iii. 44, 47-57	The Play attributed to Webster
<i>The Duchess of Malfy</i>	Bandello, i. 26	Webster's <i>Duchess of Malfy</i>
<i>A Lady of Bohemia</i>	<i>Ibid.</i> , i. 21	Massinger's <i>Picture</i>
<i>Ansaldo and Dianora</i>	Boccaccio, x. 5	Beaumont and Fletcher, <i>Triumph of Honour</i>
		(perhaps from Chaucer)
<i>Alexander de Medici</i>	Bandello, ii. 15	Fletcher's <i>Maid of the Mill</i>
<i>Sophonisba</i>	<i>Ibid.</i> , i. 41	Marston's <i>Wonder of Women</i>
<i>A Doctor of the Laws</i>	<i>Comptes du Monde Avantureux</i>	" <i>Dutch Courtesan</i>

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GILETTA OF NARBONNE

Giletta, a physician's daughter of Narbona, healed the French King of a fistula, for reward whereof she demanded Beltramo Count of Rossiglione to husband. The Count being married against his will, for despite fled to Florence and loved another. Giletta his wife, by policy, found means to lie with her husband, in place of his lover, and was begotten with child of two sons ; which known to her husband, he received her again, and afterwards he lived in great honour and felicity.

IN France there was a gentleman called Isnardo, the Count of Rossiglione, who because he was sickly and diseased, kept always in his house a physician, named Master Gerardo, of Narbona. This Count had one only son, called Beltramo, a very young child, amiable and fair. With whom there was nourished and brought up, many other children of his age : amongst whom one of the daughters of the said physician, named Giletta, who fervently fell in love with Beltramo, more than was meet for a maiden of her age. This Beltramo, when his father was dead and left under the royal custody of the King, was sent to Paris, for whose departure the maiden was very pensive. A little while after, her father being likewise dead, she was desirous to go to Paris, only to see the young Count, if for that purpose she could get any good occasion. But being diligently looked unto by her

kinsfolk (because she was rich and fatherless) she could see no convenient way for her intended journey: and being now marriageable, the love she bare to the Count was never out of her remembrance, and refused many husbands with whom her kinsfolk would have matched her, without making them privy to the cause of her refusal. Now it chanced that she burned more in love with Beltramo than ever she did before, because she heard tell that he was grown to the state of a goodly young gentleman. She heard by report, that the French King had a swelling upon his breast, which by reason of ill cure was grown to be a fistula, which did put him to marvellous pain and grief, and that there was no physician to be found (although many were proved) that could heal it, but rather did impair the grief and make it worse and worse. Wherefore the King, like one in despair, would take no more counsel or help. Whereof the young maiden was wonderful glad, thinking to have by this means, not only a lawful occasion to go to Paris, but if the disease were such (as she supposed), easily to bring to pass that she might have the Count Beltramo to her husband. Whereupon with such knowledge as she had learned at her father's hands, beforetime she made a powder of certain herbs, which she thought meet for that disease, and rode to Paris. And the first thing she went about when she came thither was to see the Count Beltramo. And then she repaired to the King, praying his grace to vouchsafe to show her his grief. The King, perceiving her to be a fair young maiden and a comely, would not hide it, but opened the same unto her. So soon as she saw it she put him in comfort, that she was able

to heal him, saying : “ Sir, if it may please your grace, I trust in God without any great pain unto your highness, within eight days to make you whole of this disease.” The King, hearing her say so, began to mock her, saying : “ How is it possible for thee, being a young woman, to do that which the best renowned physicians in the world can not ? ” He thanked her for her good will and made her a direct answer, that he was determined no more to follow the counsel of any physician. Whereunto the maiden answered : “ Sir, you despise my knowledge because I am young and a woman, but I assure you that I do not minister physic by profession, but by the aid and help of God : and with the cunning of Master Gerardo of Narbona, who was my father, and a physician of great fame so long as he lived.” The King, hearing those words, said to himself : “ This woman peradventure, is sent unto me of God, and, therefore why should I disdain to prove her cunning ? for so much as she promiseth to heal me within a little space, without any offence or grief unto me.” And being determined to prove her, he said : “ Damsel, if thou dost not heal me, but make me to break my determination, what wilt thou shall follow thereof ? ” “ Sir,” said the maiden : “ let me be kept in what guard and keeping you list : and if I do not heal you within these eight days, let me be burnt : but if I do heal your grace what recompense shall I have then ? ” To whom the King answered : “ Because thou art a maiden and unmarried, if thou heal me according to thy promise, I will bestow thee upon some gentleman, that shall be of right good worship and estimation.” To whom she answered :

“ Sir, I am very well content that you bestow me in marriage : but I beseech your grace let me have such a husband as myself shall demand, without presumption to any of your children or other of your blood.” Which request the King incontinently granted. The young maiden began to minister her physic, and in short space before her appointed time, she had thoroughly cured the King. And when the King perceived himself whole, said unto her : “ Thou hast well deserved a husband (Giletta) even such a one as thyself shalt choose.” “ I have then my lord (quoth she) deserved the Count Beltramo of Rossiglione, whom I have loved from my youth.” The King was very loth to grant him unto her : but for that he had made a promise which he was loth to break, he caused him to be called forth, and said unto him : “ Sir Count, knowing full well that you are a gentleman of great honour, our pleasure is, that you return home to your own house to order your estate according to your degree : and that you take with you a damsel which I have appointed to be your wife.” To whom the Count gave his humble thanks, and demanded what she was. “ It is she,” (quoth the King), “ that with her medicines hath healed me.” The Count knew her well and had already seen her, although she was fair, yet knowing her not to be of a stock convenientable to his nobility, scornfully said unto the King, “ Will you then (sir) give me a physician to wife ? It is not the pleasure of God that ever I should in that wise bestow myself.” To whom the King said : “ Wilt thou then, that we should break our faith, which we to recover health have given to the damsel, who for a reward asked

thee to husband?" "Sir (quoth Beltramo) you may take from me all that I have, and give my person to whom you please because I am your subject: but I assure you I shall never be contented with that marriage." "Well, you shall have her, (said the King) for the maiden is fair and wise, and loveth you most entirely: thinking verily you shall lead a more joyful life with her, than with a lady of a greater house." The Count therewithal held his peace, and the King made great preparation for the marriage. And when the appointed day was come, the Count in the presence of the King (although it were against his will) married the maiden, who loved him better than her own self. Which done the Count determining before what he would do, prayed licence to return to his country to consummate the marriage. And when he was on horseback he went not thither but took his journey into Tuscany, where understanding that the Florentines and Siennese were at wars, he determined to take the Florentines' part, and was willingly received and honourably entertained, and was made captain of a certain number of men, continuing in their service a long time. The new-married gentlewoman, scarce contented with his unkindness, hoping by her well-doing to cause him to return into his country, went to Rossiglione, where she was received of all his subjects for their Lady. And perceiving that through the Count's absence all things were spoiled and out of order, she like a sage lady with great diligence and care, disposed his things in order again: whereof the subjects rejoiced very much, bearing to her their hearty love and affection, greatly blaming the Count because he could not

content himself with her. This notable gentlewoman having restored all the country again to their ancient liberties, sent word to the Count her husband, by two knights, to signify unto him, that if it were for her sake that he had abandoned his country, upon return of answer, she to do him pleasure, would depart from thence. To whom he churlishly replied : “ Let her do what she list : for I do purpose to dwell with her, when she shall have this ring (meaning a ring which he wore) upon her finger, and a son in her arms begotten by me.” He greatly loved that ring, and kept it very carefully, and never took it from his finger, for a certain virtue that he knew it had. The knights hearing the hard condition of two things impossible : and seeing that by them he could not be removed from his determination, returned again to the lady, telling her his answer : who, very sorrowful, after she had a good while bethought her, purposed to find means to attain the two things, that thereby she might recover her husband. And having advised herself what to do, she assembled the noblest and chiefest of her country, declaring unto them in lamentable wise what she had already done, to win the love of the Count, showing them also what followed thereof. And in the end said unto them, that she was loth the Count for her sake should dwell in perpetual exile : therefore she determined to spend the rest of her time in pilgrimages and devotion, for preservation of her soul, praying them to take the charge and government of the country, and that they would let the Count understand, that she had forsaken his house, and was removed far from thence : with purpose never to

return to Rossiglione again. Many tears were shed by the people, as she was speaking those words and divers supplications were made unto him to alter his opinion but all in vain. Wherefore commanding them all unto God, she took her way with her maid, and one of her kinsmen, in the habit of a pilgrim, well furnished with silver and precious jewels : telling no man whither she went, and never rested till she came to Florence : where arriving by fortune at a poor widow's house, she contented herself with the state of a poor pilgrim, desirous to hear news of her lord, whom by fortune she saw the next day passing by the house (where she lay) on horseback with his company. And although she knew him well enough, yet she demanded of the good wife of the house what he was : who answered that he was a strange gentleman, called the Count Beltramo of Rossiglione, a courteous knight, and well beloved in the city, and that he was marvellously in love with a neighbour of hers, that was a gentlewoman, very poor and of small substance, nevertheless of right honest life and good report, and by reason of her poverty was yet unmarried, and dwelt with her mother, that was a wise and honest lady. The Countess well noting these words, and by little and little debating every particular point thereof, comprehending the effect of those news, concluded what to do, and when she had well understood which was the house, and the name of the lady, and of her daughter that was beloved of the Count : upon a day repaired to the house secretly in the habit of a pilgrim, where finding the mother and daughter in poor estate amongst their family, after she had saluted them, told the mother that she had

to say unto her. The gentlewoman rising up, courteously entertained her, and being entered alone in a chamber, they sat down and the Countess began to speak unto her in this wise. “Madam, methinks that ye be one upon whom Fortune doth frown, so well as upon me: but if you please, you may both comfort me and yourself.” The lady answered, “That there was nothing in the world whereof she was more desirous than of honest comfort.” The Countess proceeding in her talk said unto her: “I have need now of your fidelity and trust, whereupon if I do stay and you deceive me, you shall both undo me and yourself.” “Tell me then what it is hardly (said the gentlewoman) for you shall never be deceived of me.” Then the Countess began to recite her whole estate of love: telling her what she was, and what had chanced to that present day, in such perfect order as the gentlewoman believing her, because she had partly heard report before, began to have compassion upon her, and after that the Countess had rehearsed the whole circumstances, she continued her purpose, saying: “Now you have heard amongst other my troubles, what two things they be, which behoveth me to have, if I do recover my husband, which I know none can help me to obtain, but only you, if it be true that I hear, which is, that the Count my husband, is far in love with your daughter.” To whom the gentlewoman said: “Madam, if the Count love my daughter, I know not, albeit the likelihood is great: but what am I able to do, in that which you desire?” “Madam,” answered the Countess, “I will tell you: but first I will declare what I mean to do for you, if my purpose

be brought to effect : I see your fair daughter of good age, ready to marry, but as I understand the cause, why she is unmarried, is the lack of substance to bestow her. Wherefore I purpose, for recompense of the pleasure, which you shall do for me, to give so much ready money to marry her honourably, as you shall think sufficient." The Countess' offer was very well liked of the lady, because she was poor : yet having a noble heart, she said unto her. " Madam, tell me wherein I may do you service : and if it be a thing honest, I will gladly perform it, and the same being brought to pass, do as it shall please you." Then said the Countess : " I think it requisite, that by someone whom you trust, you give knowledge to the Count my husband, that your daughter is, and shall be at his commandment : and to the intent she may be well assured that he loveth her indeed above any other, she must pray him to send her a ring that he weareth upon his finger, which ring as she knoweth he loveth very dearly : and when he sendeth the ring, you shall give it unto me, and afterwards send him word, that your daughter is ready to accomplish his pleasure, and then you shall cause him secretly to come hither, and place me by him (instead of your daughter) peradventure God will give me the grace, that I may be with child, and so having this ring on my finger, and the child in my arms begotten by him, I may recover him, and by your means continue with him, as a wife ought to do with her husband." This thing seemed difficult unto the gentlewoman : fearing that there would follow reproach unto her daughter. Notwithstanding, considering what an honest part it were, to be a means that the good lady

might recover her husband, and that she might do it for a good purpose, having affiance in her honest affection, not only promised the Countess to bring this to pass, but in few days with great subtlety, following the order wherein she was instructed, she had gotten the ring, although it was with the Count's ill will, and took order that the Countess instead of her daughter did lie with him. And at the first meeting, affectuously desired by the Count: God so disposed the matter that the Countess was begotten with child, of two goodly sons, and her delivery chanced at the due time. Whereupon the gentlewoman not only contented the Countess at that time with the company of her husband, but at many other times so secretly as it was never known: the Count not thinking that he had lain with his wife, but with her whom he loved. To whom at his uprising in the morning, he used many courteous and amiable words, and gave divers fair and precious jewels, which the Countess kept most carefully: and when she perceived herself with child, she determined no more to trouble the gentlewoman, but said unto her, "Madam, thanks be to God and you, I have the thing that I desire, and even so it is time to recompence your desert, that afterwards I may depart." The gentlewoman said unto her, that if she had done any pleasure agreeable to her mind, she was right glad thereof which she did, not for hope of reward, but because it appertained to her by well-doing so to do. Whereunto the Countess said: "Your saying pleaseth me well, and for my part, I do not purpose to give unto you the thing you shall demand in reward, but for consideration of your well doing

which duty forceth me to do." The gentlewoman then constrained with necessity, demanded of her with great bashfulness, an hundred pounds to marry her daughter. The Countess perceiving the shamefastness of the gentlewoman, and her courteous demand, gave her five hundred pounds, and so many fair and costly jewels, as almost amounted to like valour. For which the gentlewoman more than contented, gave most hearty thanks to the Countess, who departed from the gentlewoman and returned to her lodging. The gentlewoman to take occasion from the Count of any further repair, or sending to her house, took her daughter with her, and went into the country to her friends. The Count Beltramo, within few days after, being revoked home to his own house by his subjects (hearing that the Countess was departed from thence), returned. The Countess knowing that her husband was gone from Florence and returned home, was very glad, continuing in Florence till the time of her childbed, being brought abed of two sons, which were very like unto their father, and caused them carefully to be nursed and brought up, and when she saw time, she took her journey (unknown to any) and arrived at Montpelier, and resting herself there for certain days, hearing news of the Count, and where he was, and that upon the day of All Saints, he purposed to make a great feast, and assembly of ladies and knights, in her pilgrim's weeds she repaired thither. And knowing that they were all assembled, at the palace of the Count, ready to sit down at the table, she passed through the people without change of apparel, with her two sons in her arms : and when she was come

up into the hall, even to the place where the Count sat, falling down prostrate at his feet, weeping, saying unto him : “ My lord, I am thy poor unfortunate wife, who to the intent thou mightest return and dwell in thine own house, have been a great while begging about the world. Therefore I now beseech thee, for the honour of God, that thou wilt observe the conditions which the two (knights that I sent unto thee) did command me to do : for behold, here in mine arms, not only one son begotten by thee, but twain, and likewise thy ring. It is now time then (if thou keep promise) that I should be received as thy wife.” The Count hearing this was greatly astonished, and knew the ring, and the children also, they were so like him. “ But tell me (quoth he) how is this come to pass ? ” The Countess to the great admiration of the Count, and of all those that were in presence, rehearsed unto them in order all that, which had been done, and the whole discourse thereof. For which cause the Count knowing the things she had spoken to be true (and perceiving her constant mind and good wit, and the two fair young boys, to keep his promise made, and to please his subjects, and the ladies that made suit unto him, to accept her from that time forth as his lawful wife, and to honour her) abjected his obstinate rigour : causing her to rise up, and embraced and kissed her, acknowledging her again for his lawful wife. And after he had appalled her according to her estate, to the great pleasure and contentation of those that were there, and of all his other friends not only that day, but many others, he kept great cheer, and from that time forth, he loved and honoured her, as his dear spouse and wife.

ROMEO AND JULIETTA

The goodly history of the true and constant love between Romeo and Julietta, the one of whom died of poison, and the other of sorrow and heaviness: wherein be comprised many adventures of love, and other devices touching the same.

AM sure that they which measure the greatness of God's works according to the capacity of their rude and simple understanding, will not lightly adhibit credit unto this history, so well for the variety of strange accidents which be therein described, as for the novelty of so rare and perfect amity. But they that have read Pliny, Valerius Maximus, Plutarch and divers other writers, do find that in old time a great number of men and women have died, some of excessive joy, some of overmuch sorrow, and some of other passions: and amongst the same, love is not the least, which when it seizeth upon any kind and gentle subject, and findeth no resistance to serve for a rampart to stay the violence of his course, by little and little undermineth, melteth and consumeth the virtues of natural powers in such wise as the spirit yielding to the burden, abandoneth the place of life: which is verified by the pitiful and unfortunate death of two lovers that surrendered their last breath in one tomb at Verona, a city of Italy, wherein repose yet

to this day (with great marvel) the bones and remnants of their late loving bodies : an history no less wonderful than true. If then particular affection which of good right every man ought to bear to the place where he was born, do not deceive those that travel, I think they will confess with me, that few cities in Italy can surpass the said city of Verona, as well for the navigable river called Adissa, which passeth almost through the midst of the same, and thereby a great traffic into Almaine, as also for the prospect towards the fertile mountains and pleasant valleys which do environ the same, with a great number of very clear and lively fountains, that serve for the ease and commodity of the place. Omitting (besides many other singularities) four bridges, and an infinite number of other honourable antiquities daily apparent unto those, that be curious to view and look upon them. Which places I have somewhat touched, because this most true history which I purpose hereafter to recite, dependeth thereupon, the memory whereof to this day is so well known at Verona, as unneths¹ their blubbered eyes be yet dry, that saw and beheld that lamentable sight. When the Senior Escala was Lord of Verona, there were two families in the city, of far greater fame than the rest, as well for riches as nobility : the one called the Monteschies, and the other the Capellets : but like as most commonly there is discord amongst them which be of semblable degree in honour, even so there happened a certain enmity between them : and for so much as the beginning thereof was unlawful and of ill foundation, so likewise in process of time it

¹ Scarcely.

kindled to such flame, as by divers and sundry devices practised on both sides, many lost their lives. The Lord Bartholomew of Escala (of whom we have already spoken), being Lord of Verona, and seeing such disorder in his commonweal, assayed divers and sundry ways to reconcile those two houses, but all in vain : for their hatred had taken such root, as the same could not be moderated by any wise counsel or good advice : between whom no other thing could be accorded, but giving over armour and weapon for the time, attending some other season more convenient, and with better leisure to appease the rest. In the time that these things were a-doing, one of the family of Monteschs called Romeo, of the age of twenty or twenty-one years, the comeliest and best conditioned gentleman that was amongst the Veronian youth, fell in love with a young gentlewoman of Verona, and in few days was attached with her beauty and good behaviour, as he abandoned all other affairs and business, to serve and honour her : and after many letters, ambassades and presents, he determined in the end to speak unto her, and to disclose his passions, which he did without any other practice. But she which was virtuously brought up, knew how to make him so good answer to cut off his amorous affections, as he had no lust after that time to return any more, and showed herself so austere and sharp of speech, as she vouchsafed not with one look to behold him. But how much the young gentleman saw her whist and silent, the more he was inflamed : and after he had continued certain months in that service without remedy of his grief, he determined in the end to depart Verona, for proof if by

change of the place, he might alter his affection, saying to himself: “What do I mean to love one that is so unkind, and thus doth disdain me: I am all her own and yet she flieth from me: I can no longer live except her presence I do enjoy: and she hath no contented mind, but when she is furthest from me: I will then from henceforth estrange myself from her, for it may so come to pass by not beholding her, that this fire in me which taketh increase and nourishment by her fair eyes, by little and little may die and quench.” But minding to put in proof what he thought, at one instant he was reduced to the contrary, who not knowing whereupon to resolve, passed days and nights in marvellous plaints and lamentations: for love vexed him so near, and had so well fixed the gentlewoman’s beauty within the bowels of his heart and mind as not able to resist, he fainted with the charge, and consumed by little and little as the snow against the sun: whereof his parents and kindred did marvel greatly, bewailing his misfortune, but above all other, one of his companions of riper age and counsel than he, began sharply to rebuke him: for the love that he bare him was so great as he felt his martyrdom and was partaker of his passion: which caused him by oft viewing his friend’s disquietness in amorous pangs, to say thus unto him: “Romeo, I marvel much that thou spendest the best time of thine age in pursuit of a thing from which thou seest thyself despised and banished, without respect either to thy prodigal dispense, to thine honour, to thy tears, or to thy miserable life, which be able to move the most constant to pity: wherefore I pray thee for the love of our ancient

amity and for thine health's sake, that thou wilt learn to be thine own man, and not to alienate thy liberty to any so ingrate as she is : for so far as I conjecture by things that are passed between you, either she is in love with some other, or else determineth never to love any. Thou art young, rich in goods and fortune, and more excellent in beauty than any gentleman in this city : thou art well learned, and the only son of the house whereof thou comest : what grief would it be to thy poor old father and other thy parents, to see thee so drowned in this dungeon of vice, specially at that age wherein thou oughtest rather to put them in some hope of thy virtue ? Begin then from henceforth to acknowledge thine error wherein thou hast hitherto lived, do away that amorous veil or cover-ture which blindeth thine eyes and letteth thee from following the right path, wherein thine ancestors have walked : or else if thou do feel thyself so subject to thine own will, yield thy heart to some other place, and choose some mistress according to thy worthiness, and henceforth do not sow thy pains in a soil so barren whereof thou reapest no fruit : the time approacheth when all the dames of the city shall assemble, where thou mayst behold such one as shall make thee forget thy former griefs." This young gentleman attentively hearing all the persuading reasons of his friend, began somewhat to moderate that heat, and to acknowledge all the exhortations which he had made to be directed to good purpose : and then determined to put them in proof, and to be present indifferently at all the feasts and assemblies of the city, without bearing affection more to one woman than to another : and continued in

this manner of life two or three months, thinking by that means to quench the sparks of ancient flames. It chanced then within few days after, about the feast of Christmas, when feasts and banquets most commonly be used, and masques according to the custom frequented, that Anthony Capellet, being the chief of that family and one of the principal lords of the city too, made a banquet, and for the better solemnization thereof, invited all the noble men and dames, to which feast resorted the most part of the youth of Verona. The family of the Capellets (as we have declared in the beginning of this history) was at variance with the Monteschés, which was the cause that none of that family repaired to that banquet, but only the young gentleman Romeo, who came in a masque after supper with certain other young gentlemen: and after they had remained a certain space with their visards on, at length they did put off the same, and Romeo very shamefast, withdrew himself into a corner of the hall: but by reason of the light of the torches which burned very bright, he was by and by known and looked upon of the whole company, but specially of the ladies, for besides his native beauty wherewith nature had adorned him, they marvelled at his audacity how he durst presume to enter so secretly into the house of that family which had little cause to do him any good. Notwithstanding, the Capellets dissembling their malice, either for the honour of the company or else for respect of his age, did not misuse him either in word or deed: by means whereof with free liberty he beheld and viewed the ladies at his pleasure, which he did so well and with grace so good, as there was none

but did very well like the presence of his person : and after he had particularly given judgment upon the excellency of each one, according to his affection, he saw one gentlewoman amongst the rest of surpassing beauty who (although he had never seen her heretofore) pleased him above the rest, and attributed unto her in heart the chiefest place for all perfection in beauty : and feasting her incessantly with piteous looks, the love which he bare to his first gentlewoman was overcome with this new fire, that took such nourishment and vigour in his heart, as he was not able never to quench the same but by death only : as you may understand by one of the strangest discourses that ever any mortal man devised. The young Romeo then feeling himself thus tossed with this new tempest, could not tell what countenance to use, but was so surprised and changed with these last flames, as he had almost forgotten himself, in such wise as he had not audacity to enquire what she was, and wholly bent himself to feed his eyes with her sight, wherewith he moistened the sweet amorous venom which did so empoison him as he ended his days with a kind of most cruel death. The gentlewoman that did put Romeo to such pain was called Julietta, and was the daughter of Capellet, the master of the house where that assembly was, who as her eyes did roll and wander to and fro, by chance espied Romeo, which unto her seemed to be the goodliest personage that ever she saw : and love (which lay in wait never until that time) assailing the tender heart of that young gentlewoman, touched her so at the quick, as for any resistance she could make, was not able to defend his forces, and then

began to set at naught the royalties of the feast, and felt no pleasure in her heart, but when she had a glimpse by throwing or receiving some sight or look of Romeo. And after they had contented each other's troubled heart with millions of amorous looks which oftentimes interchangeably encountered and met together, the burning beams gave sufficient testimony of love's privy onsets. Love having made the heart's breach of those two lovers, as they two sought means to speak together, fortune offered them a very meet and apt occasion. A certain lord of that troop and company took Julietta by the hand to dance, wherein she behaved herself so well and with so excellent grace, as she won that day the prize of honour from all the damsels of Verona. Romeo having foreseen the place whereunto she minded to retire, approached the same, and so discreetly used the matter, as he found the means at her return to sit beside her : Julietta when the dance was finished, returned to the very place where she was set before, and was placed between Romeo and another gentleman called Mercutio, which was a court-like gentleman, very well beloved of all men, and by reason of his pleasant and courteous behaviour was in every company well entertained. Mercutio that was of audacity among maidens, as a lion is among lambs, seized incontinently upon the hand of Julietta whose hands wontedly were so cold both in winter and summer as the mountain ice, although the fire's heat did warm the same. Romeo which sat upon the left side of Julietta, seeing that Mercutio held her by the right hand, took her by the other that he might not be deceived of his purpose, and

straining the same a little, he felt himself so pressed with that new favour, as he remained mute, not able to answer : but she perceiving by his change of colour, that the fault proceeded of the vehemence of love desiring to speak unto him, turned herself towards him, and with trembling voice joined with virginal shamefastness, intermedled with a certain bashfulness, said to him : “ Blessed be the hour of your near approach : ” but minding to proceed in further talk, love had so closed up her mouth, as she was not able to end her tale. Whereunto the young gentleman all ravished with joy and contentation, sighing, asked her what was the cause of that right fortunate blessing: Julietta, somewhat more emboldened, with pitiful look and smiling countenance, said unto him : “ Sir, do not marvel if I do bless your coming hither, because Sir Mercutio a good time with frosty hand hath wholly frozen mine, and you of your courtesy have warmed the same again.” Whereunto immediately Romeo replied : “ Madam, if the heavens have been so favourable to employ me to do you some agreeable service, being repaired hither by chance amongst other gentlemen, I esteem the same well bestowed, craving no greater benefit for satisfaction of all my contentations received in this world, than to serve, obey and honour you so long as my life doth last, as experience shall yield more ample proof when it shall please you to give further assay : moreover, if you have received any heat by touch of my hand, you may be well assured that those flames be dead in respect of the lively sparks and violent fire which sorteth from your fair eyes, which fire hath so fiercely inflamed all the most sensible parts of my

body, as if I be not succoured by the favour of your good graces, I do attend the time to be consumed to dust." Scarce had he made an end of those last words but the dance of the torch was at an end : whereby Julietta, which wholly burnt in love, straitly clasping her hand with his, had no leisure to make other answer, but softly thus to say : " My dear friend, I know not what other assured witness you desire of love, but that I let you understand that you be no more your own, than I am yours, being ready and disposed to obey you so far as honour shall permit, beseeching you for the present time to content yourself with this answer, until some other season meeter to communicate more secretly of our affairs." Romeo, seeing himself pressed to part of the company, and for that he knew not by what means he might see her again that was his life and death, demanded of one of his friends what she was, who made answer that she was the daughter of Capellet, the lord of the house, and master of that day's feast (who wroth beyond measure that Fortune had sent him to so dangerous a place, thought it impossible to bring to end his enterprise begun). Julietta, covetous on the other side, to know what young gentleman he was which had so courteously entertained her that night, and of whom she felt the new wound in her heart, called an old gentlewoman of honour which had nursed her and brought her up, unto whom she said leaning upon her shoulder : " Mother, what two young gentlemen be they which first go forth with the two torches before them ? " Unto whom the old gentlewoman told the name of the houses whereof they came. Then she asked her again, what young

gentleman that was which holdeth the visard in his hand, with the damask cloak about him. "It is," quoth she, "Romeo Montesche, the son of your father's capital enemy and deadly foe to all your kin." But the maiden at the only name of Montesche was altogether amazed, despairing for ever to attain to husband her great affectioned friend Romeo, for the ancient hatreds between those two families. Nevertheless she knew so well how to dissemble her grief and discontented mind, as the old gentlewoman perceived nothing, who then began to persuade her to retire into her chamber: whom she obeyed, and being in bed, thinking to take her wonted rest, a great tempest of divers thoughts began to environ and trouble her mind, in such wise as she was not able to close her eyes, but turning here and there, fantasied divers things in her thought, sometimes purposed to cut off the whole attempt of that amorous practice, sometimes to continue the same. Thus was the poor pucelle vexed with two contraries, the one comforted her to pursue her intent, the other proposed the imminent peril whereunto indiscreetly she headlong threw herself: and after she had wandered of long time in this amorous labyrinth, she knew not whereupon to resolve, but wept incessantly, and accused herself, saying: "Ah, caitiff and miserable creature, from whence do rise these unaccustomed travails which I feel in mind, provoking me to lose my rest: but unfortunate wretch, what do I know if that young gentleman do love me as he saith? It may be under the veil of sugared words he goeth about to steal away mine honour, to be revenged of my parents which have offended his, and by that

means to my everlasting reproach to make me the fable of the Verona people." Afterwards suddenly as she condemned that which she suspected in the beginning, said: "Is it possible that under such beauty and rare comeliness, disloyalty and treason may have their siege and lodging? If it be true that the face is the faithful messenger of the mind's conceit, I may be assured that he doth love me: for I marked so many changed colours in his face in time of his talk with me, and saw him so transported and beside himself, as I cannot wish any other more certain luck of love, wherein I will persist immutable to the last gasp of life, to the intent I may have him to be my husband: for it may so come to pass, as this new alliance shall engender a perpetual peace and amity between his house and mine." Arresting then upon this determination still, as she saw Romeo passing before her father's gate, she showed herself with merry countenance, and followed him so with look of eye, until she had lost his sight. And continuing this manner of life for certain days, Romeo not able to content himself with looks, daily did behold and mark the situation of the house, and one day amongst others he espied Julietta at her chamber window, bounding upon a narrow lane, right over against which chamber he had a garden which was the cause that Romeo fearing discovery of their love, began the day time to pass no more before the gate, but so soon as the night with his brown mantle had covered the earth, he walked alone up and down that little street: and after he had been there many times, missing the chiefest cause of his coming, Julietta impatient of her evil, one night repaired to

her window, and perceived through the brightness of the moon her friend Romeo under her window, no less attended for, than he himself was waiting. Then she secretly with tears in her eyes and with voice interrupted by sighs, said : " Signor Romeo, methinks that you hazard your person too much, and commit the same into great danger at this time of the night, to protrude yourself to the mercy of them which mean you little good. Who if they had taken would have cut you in pieces, and mine honour (which I esteem dearer than my life) hindered and suspected for ever." " Madam," answered Romeo, " my life is in the hand of God, who only can dispose the same : howbeit if any man had sought means to bereave me of my life, I should (in the presence of you) have made him known what mine ability had been to defend the same. Notwithstanding life is not so dear, and of such estimation with me, but that I could vouchsafe to sacrifice the same for your sake : and although my mishap had been so great, as to be dispatched in that place, yet had I no cause to be sorry therefore, except it had been by losing the means and way how to make you understand the good will and duty which I bear you, desiring not to conserve the same for any commodity that I hope to have thereby, nor for any other respect, but only to love, serve, and honour you, so long as breath shall remain in me." So soon as he had made an end of his talk, love and pity had begun to seize upon the heart of Julietta, and leaning her head upon her hand, having her face all besprent with tears, she said unto Romeo : " Sir Romeo, I pray you not to renew that grief again: for the only memory of such

inconvenience, maketh me to counterpoise between death and life, my heart being so united with yours, as you cannot receive the least injury in this world, wherein I shall not be so great a partaker as yourself: beseeching you for conclusion, that if you desire your own health and mine, to declare unto me in few words what your determination is to attain: for if you covet any other secret thing at my hands, more than mine honour can well allow, you are marvellously deceived: but if your desire be godly, and that the friendship which you protest to bear me, be founded upon virtue, and to be concluded by marriage, receiving me for your wife and lawful spouse, you shall have such part in me, as whereof without any regard to the obedience and reverence that I owe to my parents, or to the ancient enmity of our families, I will make you the only lord and master over me, and of all the things that I possess, being prest and ready in all points to follow your commandment: but if your intent be otherwise, and think to reap the fruit of my virginity, under pretence of wanton amity, you be greatly deceived, and do pray you to avoid and suffer me from henceforth to live and rest amongst mine equals." Romeo which looked for none other thing, holding up his hands to the heavens, with incredible joy and contentation, answered: "Madam forasmuch as it hath pleased you to do me that honour to accept me for such a one, I accord and consent to your request, and do offer unto you the best part of my heart, which shall remain with you for gage and sure testimony of my saying, until such time as God shall give me leave to make you the entire owner and possessor of the same. And to the intent

I may begin mine enterprise, tomorrow I will to the Friar Lawrence for counsel in the same, who besides that he is my ghostly father is accustomed to give me instruction in all my other secret affairs, and fail not (if you please) to meet me again in this place at this very hour, to the intent I may give you to understand the device between him and me.” Which she liked very well, and ended their talk for that time. Romeo receiving none other favour at her hands for that night, but only words. This Friar Lawrence, of whom hereafter we shall make more ample mention, was an ancient Doctor of Divinity, of the order of the Friars Minors, who besides the happy profession which he had made in study of holy writ, was very skilful in philosophy, and a great searcher of nature’s secrets, and exceeding famous in magic knowledge, and other hidden and secret sciences, which nothing diminished his reputation, because he did not abuse the same. And this friar through his virtue and piety, had so well won the citizens’ hearts of Verona, as he was almost the confessor to them all, and of all men generally reverenced and beloved: and many times for his great prudence was called by the lords of the city to the hearing of their weighty causes. And amongst other he was greatly favoured by the Lord of Escala, that time the principal governor of Verona, and of all the family of Monteschés, and of the Capellets and of many other. The young Romeo (as we have already declared) from his tender age, bare a certain particular amity to Friar Lawrence, and departed to him his secrets, by means whereof so soon as he was gone from Julietta, went straight to the Friars Franciscans, where from point to point he

discoursed the success of his love to that good father, and the conclusion of marriage between him and Julietta, adding upon the end of talk, that he would rather choose shameful death, than to fail her of his promise. To whom the good friar after he had debated divers matters, and proposed all the inconveniences of that secret marriage, exhorted him to more mature deliberation of the same : notwithstanding, all the alleged persuasions were not able to revoke his promise. Wherefore the friar vanquished with his stubbornness, and also forecasting in his mind that the marriage might be some means of reconciliation of those two houses, in the end agreed to his request, entreating him that he might have one day's respite for leisure to excogitate what was best to be done. But if Romeo was careful for his part to provide for his affairs, Julietta likewise did her endeavour. For seeing that she had none about her to whom she might discover her passions, she devised to impart the whole to her nurse which lay in her chamber, appointed to wait upon her, to whom she committed the entire secrets of the love between Romeo and her. And although the old woman in the beginning resisted Julietta her intent, yet in the end she knew so well how to persuade and win her, that she promised in all that she was able to do, to be at her commandment. And then she sent her with all diligence to speak to Romeo, and to know of him by what means they might be married, and that he would do her to understand the determination between Friar Lawrence and him. Whom Romeo answered, how the first day wherein he had informed Friar Lawrence of the matter, the said

Friar deferred answer until the next, which was the very same, and that it was not past one hour sithence he returned with final resolution, and that Friar Lawrence and he had devised, that she the Saturday following, should crave leave of her mother to go to confession, and to repair to the Church of St Francis, where in a certain chapel secretly they should be married, praying her in any wise not to fail to be there. Which thing she brought to pass with such discretion, as her mother agreed to her request: and accompanied only with her governess and a young maiden, she repaired thither at the determined day and time. And so soon as she was entered the church, she called for the good Doctor Friar Lawrence, unto whom answer was made that he was in the shriving chapel, and forthwith advertisement was given him of her coming. So soon as Friar Lawrence was certified of Julietta, he went into the body of the church, and willed the old woman and young maiden to go hear service, and that when he had heard the confession of Julietta, he would send for them again. Julietta being entered a little cell with Friar Lawrence, he shut fast the door as he was wont to do, where Romeo and he had been together shut fast in, the space of one whole hour before. Then Friar Lawrence after that he had shrived them, said to Julietta: "Daughter, as Romeo here present has certified me, you be agreed and contented to take him to husband, and he likewise you for his espouse and wife. Do you now still persist and continue in that mind?" The lovers answered that they desired none other thing. The friar seeing their conformed and agreeable wills, after he had discoursed somewhat upon the

commendation of marriage dignity, pronounced the usual words of the Church, and she having received the ring from Romeo, they rose up before the friar, who said unto them : “ If you have any other thing to confer together, do the same with speed : for I purpose that Romeo shall go from hence so secretly as he can.” Romeo sorry to go from Julietta said secretly unto her, that she should send unto him after dinner the old woman, and that he would cause to be made a corded ladder the same evening, thereby to climb up to her chamber window, where at more leisure they would devise of their affairs. Things determined between them, either of them retired to their house with incredible contention, attending the happy hour for consummation of their marriage. When Romeo was come home to his house, he declared wholly what had passed between him and Julietta unto a servant of his called Pietro, whose fidelity he had so greatly tried, as he durst have trusted him with his life, and commanded him with expedition to provide a ladder of cords with two strong hooks of iron fastened to both ends, which he easily did, because they were much used in Italy. Julietta did not forget in the evening about five of the clock, to send the old woman to Romeo, who having prepared all things necessary, caused the ladder to be delivered unto her, and prayed her to require Julietta the same evening not to fail to be at the accustomed place. But if this journey seemed long to these two passioned lovers, let others judge, that have at other times assayed the like : for every minute of an hour seemed to them a thousand years, so that if they had power to command the heavens (as Joshua

did the sun) the earth had incontinently been shadowed with darkest clouds. The appointed hour come, Romeo put on the most sumptuous apparel he had, and conducted by good fortune near to the place where his heart took life, was so fully determined of his purpose, as easily he climbed up the garden wall. Being arrived hard to the window, he perceived Julietta, who had already so well fastened the ladder to draw him up, as without any danger at all, he entered her chamber, which was so clear as the day, by reason of the tapers of virgin wax, which Julietta had caused to be lighted, that she might the better behold her Romeo. Julietta for her part was but in her night kerchief: who so soon as she perceived him colled him about the neck, and after she had kissed and rekissed him a million of times, began to embrace him between her arms, having no power to speak unto him but by sighs only, holding her mouth close against his, and being in this trance beheld him with pitiful eye, which made him to live and die together. And afterwards somewhat come to herself, she said with sighs deeply fetched from the bottom of her heart: "Ah, Romeo, the exemplar of all virtue and gentleness, most heartily welcome to this place, wherein for your lack, and absence, and for fear of your person, I have gushed forth so many tears as the spring is almost dry: but now that I hold you between my arms, let death and fortune do what they list. For I count myself more than satisfied of all my sorrows past, by the favour alone of your presence." Whom Romeo with weeping eye, giving over silence answered: "Madam, forasmuch as I never received so much of fortune's grace, as to

make you feel by lively experience what power you had over me, and the torment every minute of the day sustained for your occasion, I do assure you the least grief that vexeth me for your absence, is a thousand times more painful than death, which long time ere this had cut off the thread of my life, if the hope of this happy journey had not been, which paying me now the just tribute of my weepings past, maketh me better content, and more glad, than if the whole world were at my commandment, beseeching you (without further memory of ancient grief) to take advice in time to come how we may content our passionate hearts, and to sort our affairs with such wisdom and discretion, as our enemies without advantage may let us continue the remnant of our days in rest and quiet." And as Julietta was about to make answer, the old woman came in the meantime, and said unto them : " He that wasteth time in talk, recovereth the same too late. But forasmuch as either of you hath endured such mutual pains, behold (quoth she) a camp which I have made ready : " (showing them the field bed which she had prepared and furnished,) whereunto they easily agreed, and being then between the sheets in privy bed, after they had gladded and cherished themselves with all kind of delicate embracements which love was able to devise, Romeo unloosing the holy lines of virginity, took possession of the place, which was not yet besieged with such joy and contention as they can judge which have assayed like delights. Their marriage thus consummated, Romeo perceiving the morning making hasty approach, took his leave, making promise that he would not fail within a day or two to resort again to the

place by like means and at the same time, until Fortune had provided sure occasion unfearfully to manifest their marriage to the whole world. And thus a month or twain, they continued their joyful minds to their incredible satisfaction, until Lady Fortune envious of their prosperity, turned her wheel to tumble them into such a bottomless pit, as they paid her usury for their pleasures past, by a certain most cruel and pitiful death, as you shall understand hereafter by the discourse that followeth. Now as we have before declared, the Capellets and the Monteschés were not so well reconciled by the Lord of Verona, but that there rested in them such sparks of ancient displeasures, as either parties waited but for some light occasion to draw together, which they did in the Easter holy days (as bloody men commonly be most willingly disposed after a good time to commit some nefarious deed) besides the Gate of Boursarie leading to the old castle of Verona, a troop of Capellets rencountered with certain of the Monteschés, and without other words began to set upon them. And the Capellets had for chief of their glorious enterprise one called Thibault, cousin-german to Julietta, a young man strongly made and of good experiance of arms, who exhorted his companions with stout stomachs to repress the boldness of the Monteschés, that there might from that time forth no memory of them be left at all. The rumour of this fray was dispersed throughout all the corners of Verona, that succour might come from all parts of the city to depart the same. Whereof Romeo advertised, who walked along the city with certain of his companions, hasted him speedily to the place

where the slaughter of his parents and allies were committed : and after he had well advised and beholden many wounded and hurt on both sides, he said to his companions : “ My friends let us part them, for they be so fleshed one upon another, as will all be hewed to pieces before the game be done.” And saying so, he thrust himself amidst the troop, and did no more but part the blows on either side, crying upon them aloud : “ My friends, no more, it is time henceforth that our quarrel cease. For besides the provocation of God’s just wrath, our two families be slanderous to the whole world, and are the cause that this commonwealth doth grow unto disorder.” But they were so eager and furious one against the other, as they gave no heed to Romeo’s counsel, and bent themselves to kill, dismember, and tear each other in pieces. And the fight was so cruel and outrageous between them, as they which looked on were amazed to see them endure those blows, for the ground was all covered with arms, legs, thighs and blood, wherein no sign of cowardness appeared, and maintained their fight so long, that none was able to judge who had the better, until that Thibault, cousin to Julietta, inflamed with ire and rage, turned towards Romeo thinking with a prick to run him through. But he was so well armed and defended with a privy coat which he wore ordinarily for the doubt he had of the Capellets, as the prick rebounded : unto whom Romeo made answer : “ Thibault, thou mayest know by the patience which I have had until this present time, that I came not hither to fight with thee or thine, but to seek peace and atonement between us, and if thou thinkest that for

lack of courage I have failed mine endeavour, thou doest great wrong to my reputation. And impute this my sufferance to some other particular respect, rather than to want of stomach. Wherefore abuse me not, but be content with this great effusion of blood and murders already committed. And provoke me not, I beseech thee, to pass the bounds of my good will and mind." "Ah, traitor" said Thibault, "thou thinkest to save thyself by the plot of thy pleasant tongue, but see that thou defend thyself, else presently I will make thee feel that thy tongue shall not guard thy corpse, nor yet be the buckler to defend the same from present death." And saying so, he gave him a blow with such fury, as had not other warded the same, he had cut off his head from his shoulders, and the one was no readier to lend, but the other incontinently was able to pay again, for he being not only wroth with the blow that he had received, but offended with the injury which the other had done, began to pursue his enemy with such courage and vivacity, as at the third blow with his sword he caused him to fall backward stark dead upon the ground with a prick vehemently thrust into his throat, which he followed till his sword appeared through the hinder part of the same, by reason whereof the conflict ceased. For besides that Thibault was the chief of his company he was also born of one of the noblest houses within the city, which caused the potestate to assemble his soldiers with diligence for the apprehension and imprisonment of Romeo, who seeing ill fortune at hand, in secretwise conveyed himself to Friar Lawrence at the Friars Franscisans. And the friar understanding of his fact, kept him in a

certain secret place of his convent until fortune did otherwise provide for his safe going abroad. The bruit spread throughout the city, of this chance done upon the Lord Thibault, the Capellets in mourning weeds caused the dead body to be carried before the seigniory of Verona, so well to move them to pity as to demand justice for the murder : before whom came also the Monteschs declaring the innocency of Romeo and the wilful assault of the other. The council assembled and witnesses heard on both parts, a strait commandment was given by the lord of the city to give over their weapons, and touching the offence of Romeo, because he had killed the other in his own defence, he was banished Verona for ever. This common misfortune published throughout the city was generally sorrowed and lamented. Some complaineth the death of the Lord Thibault, so well for his dexterity in arms as for the hope of his great good service in time to come, if he had not been prevented by such cruel death. Others bewailed (especially the ladies and gentlewomen) the overthrow of young Romeo, who besides his beauty and good grace wherewith he was enriched, had a certain natural allurement, by virtue whereof he drew unto him the hearts of each man, like as the stony adamant doth the cankered iron, in such wise as the whole nation and people of Verona lamented his mischance : but above all unfortunate Julietta, who advertised both of the death of her cousin Thibault, and of the banishment of her husband, made the air sound with infinite number of mournful plaints and miserable lamentations. Then feeling herself too much outraged with extreme passion, she went into her cham-

ber, and overcome with sorrow threw herself upon her bed, where she began to reinforce her dolour after so strange fashion, as the most constant would have been moved to pity. Then like one out of her wits, she gazed here and there, and by fortune beholding the window whereat Romeo was wont to enter into her chamber, cried out : " Oh, unhappy window, oh entry most unlucky, wherein were woven the bitter toil of my former mishaps, if by thy means I have received at other times some light pleasure or transitory contention, thou now makest me pay a tribute so rigorous and painful, as my tender body not able any longer to support the same, shall henceforth open the gate to that life, where the ghost discharged from this mortal burden shall seek in some place else more assured rest. Ah Romeo, Romeo, when acquaintance first began between us, and reclined mine ears unto thy suborned promises, confirmed with so many oaths, I would never have believed that in place of our continued amity, and in appeasing of the hatred of our houses, thou wouldest have sought occasion to break the same by an act so shameful, whereby thy fame shall be spotted for ever, and I, miserable wretch, desolate of spouse and companion. But if thou hadst been so greedy after the Capellets' blood, wherefore didst thou spare the dear blood of mine own heart, when so many times and in such secret place the same was at the mercy of thy cruel hands ? The victory which thou shouldst have gotten over me, had it not been glorious enough for thine ambitious mind, but for more triumphant solemnity to be crowned with the blood of my dearest kinsman ? Now get thee hence

therefore into some other place to deceive some other, so unhappy as myself. Never come again in place where I am, for no excuse shall hereafter take hold to assuage mine offended mind : in the meantime I shall lament the rest of my heavy life, with such store of tears, as my body dried up from all humidity, shall shortly search relief in earth.” And having made an end of those her words, her heart was so grievously strained as she could neither weep nor speak, and stood so immovable as if she had been in a trance. Then being somewhat come again unto herself, with feeble voice she said : “ Ah, murderous tongue of other men’s honour, how darest thou so infamously to speak of him whom his very enemies do commend and praise ? How presumest thou to impute the blame upon Romeo, whose unguiltiness and innocent deed every man alloweth ? Where from henceforth shall be his refuge, sith she which ought to be the only bulwark and assured rampire of his distress, doth pursue and defame him ? Receive, receive then Romeo the satisfaction of mine ingratitude by the sacrifice which I shall make of my proper life, and so the fault which I have committed against thy loyalty shall be made open to the world, thou being revenged and myself punished.” And thinking to use some further talk, all the powers of her body failed her with signs of present death. But the good old woman which could not imagine the cause of Julietta her long absence, doubted very much that she suffered some passion, and sought her up and down in every place within her father’s palace until at length she found her lying along upon her bed, all the outward parts of her body so cold as marble. But

the good old woman which thought her to be dead, began to cry like one out of her wits, saying : “ Ah dear daughter and nurse-child, how much doth thy death now grieve me at the very heart ! ” And as she was feeling all the parts of her body, she perceived some spark of life to be yet within the same, which caused her to call her many times by her name, till at length she brought her out of her swoon, then said unto her : “ Why, Julietta, mine own dear darling, what mean you by this turmoiling of yourself ? I cannot tell from whence this your behaviour and that immoderate heaviness do proceed, but well I wot that within this hour I thought to have accompanied you to the grave.” “ Alas, good mother,” (answered woeful Julietta) “ do you not most plainly perceive and see what just cause I have to sorrow and complain, losing at one instant two persons of the world which were unto me most dear ? ” “ Methinks,” answered the good woman, “ that it is not seemly for a gentlewoman of your degree to fall into such extremity : for in time of tribulation wisdom should most prevail. And if the Lord Thibault be dead do you think to get him again by tears ? What is he that doth not accuse his overmuch presumption ? Would you that Romeo had done that wrong to him and his house, to suffer himself outraged and assailed by one to whom in manhood and prowess he is not inferior ? Sufficeth you that Romeo is alive, and his affairs in such estate who in time may be called home again from banishment, for he is a great lord, and as you know, well allied and favoured of all men, wherefore arm yourself from henceforth with patience : for albeit Fortune doth estrange him from you for a time, yet

sure I am that hereafter she will restore him unto you again with greater joy and contentation than before. And to the end that we be better assured in what state he is, if you will promise me to give over your heaviness, I will to-day know of Friar Lawrence whither he is gone." To which request Julietta agreed, and then the good woman repaired to St Francis', where she found Friar Lawrence who told her that the same night Romeo would not fail at his accustomed hour to visit Julietta, and there to do her to understand what he purposed to do in time to come. This journey then fared like the voyages of mariners, who after they had been tossed by great and troubrous tempests, seeing some sunbeam pierce the heavens to lighten the land, assure themselves again, and thinking to have avoided shipwreck, and suddenly the seas begin to swell, the waves do roar with such vehemence and noise, as if they were fallen again into greater danger than before. The assigned hour come, Romeo failed not according to his promise to be in his garden, where he found his furniture prest to mount the chamber of Julietta, who with displayed arms, began so straitly to embrace him, as it seemed that the soul would have abandoned her body. And they two more than a large quarter of an hour were in such agony as they were not able to pronounce one word, and wetting each other's faces fast closed together, the tears trickled down in such abundance as they seemed to be thoroughly bathed therein, which Romeo perceiving, thinking to stay those immoderate tears, said unto her: "Mine own dearest friend Julietta, I am not now determined to recite the particulars of the strange haps of frail and

inconstant Fortune, who in a moment hoisteth a man up to the highest degree of her wheel, and by and by, in less space than the twinkling of an eye, she throweth him down again so low, as more misery is prepared for him in one day, than favour in one hundred years : which I now prove and have experience in myself, which have been nourished delicately amongst my friends, and maintained in such prosperous state, as you do little know, hoping for the full perfection of my felicity by means of our marriage to have reconciled our parents and friends, and to conduct the residue of my life according to the scope and lot determined by Almighty God : and nevertheless all mine enterprises be put back, and my purposes turned clean contrary, in such wise that from henceforth I must wander like a vagabond through divers provinces, and sequestrate myself from my friends, without assured place of mine abode, which I desire to let you weet, to the intent you may be exhorted in time to come, patiently to bear so well mine absence, as that which it shall please God to appoint." But Julietta, all affrighted with tears and mortal agonies, would not suffer him to pass any further, but interrupting his purpose said unto him : " Romeo, how canst thou be so hard-hearted and void of all pity to leave me here alone, besieged with so many deadly miseries ? There is neither hour nor minute wherein death doth not appear a thousand times before me, and yet my mishap is such as I cannot die, and therefore do manifestly perceive that the same death preserveth my life, of purpose to delight in my griefs and triumph over my evils. And thou like the minister and tyrant of her cruelty,

dost make no conscience (for aught that I can see) having achieved the sum of thy desires and pleasures on me, to abandon and forsake me: whereby I well perceive that all the laws of amity are dead and utterly extinguished, forasmuch as he in whom I had greatest hope and confidence, and for whose sake I am become an enemy to myself, doth disdain and contemn me. No, no, Romeo, thou must fully resolve thyself upon one of these two points, either to see me incontinently thrown down headlong from this high window after thee: or else to suffer me to accompany thee into that country or place whither fortune shall guide thee: for my heart is so much transformed into thine, that so soon as I hear of thy departure, presently my life will depart this woeful body: the continuance whereof I do not desire for any other purpose, but only to delight myself in thy presence, to be partaker of thy misfortunes: and therefore if ever there lodged any pity in the heart of gentleman, I beseech thee Romeo with all humility, that it may now find place in thee, and that thou wilt vouchsafe to receive me for thy servant and the faithful companion of thy mishaps: and if thou think that thou canst not conveniently receive me in the estate and habit of a wife, who shall let me to change mine apparel? Shall I be the first that have used like shifts to escape the tyranny of parents? Dost thou doubt that my service will not be so good unto thee as that of Pietro thy servant? Will my loyalty and fidelity be less than his? My beauty which at other times thou hast so greatly commended, it is not esteemed of thee? My tears, my love and the ancient pleasures and delights that you have taken in me

shall they be in oblivion?" Romeo, seeing her in these alterations, fearing that worse inconvenience would chance, took her again between his arms, and kissing her amorously, said: "Julietta, the only mistress of my heart, I pray thee in the name of God, and for the fervent love which thou bearest me, to do away those vain cogitations, except thou mean to seek and hazard the destruction of us both: for if thou persevere in this purpose, there is no remedy but we must both perish: for so soon as thine absence shall be known, thy father will make such earnest pursuit after us, that we cannot choose but be descried and taken, and in the end cruelly punished, I as a thief and stealer of thee, and thou as a disobedient daughter to thy father: and so instead of pleasant and quiet life, our days shall be abridged by most shameful death. But if thou wilt recline thyself to reason, (the right rule of human life,) and for the time abandon our mutual delights, I will take such order in the time of my banishment, as within three or four months without any delay I shall be revoked home again: but if it fall out otherwise (as I trust not) howsoever it happen, I will come again unto thee, and with the help of my friends will fetch thee from Verona by strong hand, not in counterfeit apparel as a stranger, but like my spouse and perpetual companion: in the meantime quiet yourself and be sure that nothing else but death shall divide and put us asunder." The reasons of Romeo so much prevailed with Julietta, as she made him this answer: "My dear friend, I will do nothing contrary to your will and pleasure: and to what place so ever you repair, my heart shall be your own, in like sort

as you have given yours to be mine : in the meanwhile I pray you not to fail oftentimes to advertise me by Friar Lawrence, in what state your affairs be, and specially of the place of your abode.” Thus these two poor lovers passed the night together, until the day began to appear which did divide them, to their extreme sorrow and grief. Romeo having taken leave of Julietta, went to St Francis’, and after he had advertised Friar Lawrence of his affairs, departed from Verona in the habit of a merchant stranger, and used such expedition as without hurt he arrived at Mantuona (accompanied only with Pietro his servant, whom he hastily sent back again to Verona to serve his father) where he took a house : and living in honourable company, assayed certain months to put away the grief which so tormented him. But during the time of his absence, miserable Julietta could not so cloak her sorrow, but that through the evil colour of her face, her inward passion was descried : by reason whereof her mother, who heard her oftentimes sighing and incessantly complaining, could not forbear to say unto her : “ Daughter, if you continue long after this sort, you will hasten the death of your good father and me, who love you so dearly as our own lives : wherefore henceforth moderate your heaviness, and endeavour yourself to be merry : think no more upon the death of your cousin Thibault, whom (sith it pleased God to call away) do you think to revoke with tears, and so withstand His almighty will ? ” But the poor gentlewoman not able to dissemble her grief said unto her : “ Madam, long time it is sithence the last tears for Thibault were poured forth, and I believe that the fountain is so well sucked

and dried up, as no more will spring in that place." The mother, which could not tell to what effect those words were spoken, held her peace, for fear she should trouble her daughter: and certain days after, seeing her to continue in heaviness and continual griefs, assayed by all means possible to know, as well of her, as of other the household servants, the occasion of their sorrow, but all in vain: wherewith the poor mother, vexed beyond measure, purposed to let the Lord Antonio her husband to understand the case of her daughter: and upon a day seeing him at convenient leisure, she said unto him: "My lord, if you have marked the countenance of our daughter, and her kind of behaviour sithence the death of the Lord Thibault her cousin, you shall perceive so strange mutation in her, as it will make you to marvel, for she is not only contented to forgo meat, drink and sleep, but she spendeth her time in nothing else than in weeping and lamentation, delighting to keep herself solitary within her chamber, where she tormenteth herself so outrageously as if we take not heed, her life is to be doubted, and not able to know the origin of her pain, the more difficult shall be the remedy: for albeit that I have sought means by all extremity, yet cannot I learn the cause of her sickness: and where I thought in the beginning that it proceeded upon the death of her cousin, now I do manifestly perceive the contrary, specially when she herself did assure me that she had already wept and shed the last tears for him that she was minded to do: and uncertain whereupon to resolve, I do think verily that she mourneth for some despite, to see the most part of

her companions married, and she yet unprovided, persuading with herself (it may be) that we her parents do not care for her: wherefore dear husband, I heartily beseech you for our rest and her quiet, that hereafter ye be careful to provide for her some marriage worthy of our state." Whereunto the Lord Antonio willingly agreed, saying unto her: "Wife, I have many times thought upon that whereof you speak, notwithstanding sith as yet she is not attained to the age of eighteen years, I thought to provide a husband at leisure: nevertheless things being come to these terms, and knowing the virgin's chastity is a dangerous treasure, I will be mindful of the same to your contention, and she matched in such wise, as she shall think the time hitherto well delayed. In the meanwhile mark diligently whether she be in love with any, to the end that we have not so great regard to goods or the nobility of the house wherein we mean to bestow her, as to the life and health of our daughter, who is to me so dear as I had rather die a beggar without lands or goods, than to bestow her upon one which shall use and treat her ill." Certain days after that the Lord Antonio had bruited the marriage of his daughter, many gentlemen were suitors, so well for the excellency of her beauty, as for her great riches and revenue. But above all others, the alliance of a young earl named Paris, the Count of Lodronne, liked the Lord Antonio: unto whom liberally he gave his consent, and told his wife the party upon whom he did mean to bestow his daughter. The mother very joyful that they had found so honest a gentleman for their daughter, caused her secretly to be called before her, doing her to understand what

things had passed between her father and the Count Paris, discoursing unto her the beauty and good grace of the young count, the virtues for which he was commended of all men, joining thereunto for conclusion the great riches and favour which he had in the goods of fortune, by means whereof she and her friends should live in eternal honour: but Julietta which had rather to have been torn in pieces than to agree to that marriage, answered her mother with a more than accustomed stoutness: "Madam, I much marvel, and therewithal am astonished that you being a lady discreet and honourable, will be so liberal over your daughter as to commit her to the pleasure and will of another, before you do know how her mind is bent: you may do as it pleaseth you, but of one thing I do well assure you, that if you bring it to pass, it shall be against my will: and touching the regard and estimation of Count Paris, I shall first lose my life before he shall have power to touch any part of my body: which being done, it is you that shall be counted the murderer by delivering me into the hands of him, whom I neither can, will, or know which way to love: wherefore I pray you to suffer me henceforth thus to live, without taking any further care of me, for as much as my cruel fortune hath otherwise disposed of me." The dolorous mother which knew not what judgment to fix upon her daughter's answer, like a woman confused and besides herself went to seek the Lord Antonio, unto whom without concealing any part of her daughter's answer, she did him understand the whole. The good old man, offended beyond measure, commanded her incontinently by force to be brought

before him, if of her own good will she would not come : so soon as she came before her father, her eyes full of tears, fell down at his feet, which she bathed with the lukewarm drops that distilled from her eyes in great abundance, and thinking to open her mouth to cry him mercy, the sobs and sighs many times stopped her speech, that she remained dumb, not able to frame a word. But the old man, nothing moved with his daughter's tears, said unto her in great rage : "Come hither, thou unkind and disobedient daughter, hast thou forgotten how many times thou hast heard spoken at the table, of the puissance and authority our ancient Roman fathers had over their children ? unto whom it was not only lawful to sell, gage and otherwise dispose them (in their necessity) at their pleasure, but also, which is more, they had absolute power over their death and life ? With what irons, with what torments, with what racks would those good fathers chaste and correct thee if they were alive again, to see that ingratitude, misbehaviour and disobedience which thou usest towards thy father, who with many prayers and requests hath provided one of the greatest lords of this province to be thy husband, a gentleman of best renown, and endued with all kind of virtues, of whom thou and I be unworthy, both for the notable mass of goods and substance wherewith he is enriched, as also for the honour and generosity of the house whereof he is descended, and yet thou playest the part of an obstinate and rebellious child against thy father's will. I take the omnipotency of that Almighty God to witness, which hath vouchsafed to bring thee forth into this world, that if upon Tuesday

next thou failest to prepare thyself to be at my Castle of Villafranco, where the Count Paris purposeth to meet us, and there give thy consent to that which thy mother and I have agreed upon, I will not only deprive thee of my worldly goods, but also will make thee espouse and marry a prison so strait and sharp, as a thousand times thou shalt curse the day and time wherein thou wast born : wherefore from henceforth take advisement what thou doest for except the promise be kept which I have made to the Count Paris, I will make thee feel how great the just choler of an offended father is against a child unkind.” And without staying for other answer of his daughter, the old man departed the chamber, and left her upon her knees. Julietta, knowing the fury of her father, fearing to incur his indignation or to provoke his further wrath retired for the day into her chamber, and contrived that whole night more in weeping than sleeping. And the next morning, feigning to go hear service, she went forth with the woman of her chamber to the Friar’s, where she caused Father Lawrence to be called unto her, and prayed him to hear her confession : and when she was upon her knees before him, she began her confession with tears, telling him the great mischief that was prepared for her, by the marriage accorded between her father and the Count Paris : and for conclusion said unto him : “ Sir, forasmuch as you know I cannot by God’s law be married twice, and that I have but one God, one husband and one faith, I am determined when I am from hence, with these two hands which you see joined before you, this day to end my sorrowful life, that my soul may bear

witness in the heavens, and my blood upon the earth of my faith and loyalty preserved." Then having ended her talk, she looked about her, and seemed by her wild countenance as though she had devised some sinister purpose: wherefore Friar Lawrence, astonished beyond measure, fearing lest she would have executed that which she was determined, said unto her: "Mistress Julietta, I pray you in the name of God by little and little to moderate your conceived grief, and to content yourself whilst you be here, until I have provided what is best for you to do, for before you part from hence, I will give you such consolation and remedy for your afflictions, as you shall remain satisfied and contented." And resolved upon this good mind, he speedily went out of the church unto his chamber, where he began to consider of many things, his conscience being moved to hinder the marriage between the Count Paris and her, knowing by his means she had espoused another, and calling to remembrance what a dangerous enterprise he had begun by committing himself to the mercy of a simple damsel, and that if she failed to be wise and secret, all their doings should be described, he defamed, and Romeo her spouse punished. He then after he had well debated upon infinite number of devices, was in the end overcome with pity, and determined rather to hazard his honour, than to suffer the adultery of the Count Paris with Julietta: and being determined hereupon, opened his closet and taking a vial in his hand, returned again to Julietta, whom he found like one that was in a trance, waiting for news either of life or death: of whom the good old father demanded upon what day her marriage

was appointed. "The first day of that appointment (quoth she) is upon Wednesday, which is the day ordained for my consent of marriage accorded between my father and Count Paris, but the nuptial solemnity is not before the tenth day of September." "Well then" (quoth the religious father) "be of good cheer, daughter, for our Lord God hath opened a way unto me both to deliver you and Romeo from the prepared thraldom. I have known your husband from his cradle, and he hath daily committed unto me the greatest secrets of his conscience, and I have so dearly loved him in turn, as if he had been my own son: wherefore my heart cannot abide that any man should do him wrong in that specially wherein my counsel may stand him in stead. And forasmuch as you are his wife, I ought likewise to love you, and seek means to deliver you from the martyrdom and anguish wherewith I see your heart besieged: understand then, good daughter, of a secret which I purpose to manifest unto you, and take heed above all things that you declare it to no living creature, for therein consisteth your life and death. Ye be not ignorant by the common report of the citizens of this city, and by the same published of me, that I have travelled through all the provinces of the habitable earth, whereby during the continual time of twenty years I have sought no rest for my wearied body, but rather have many times protruded the same to the mercy of brute beasts in the wilderness, and many times also to the merciless waves of the seas, and to the pity of common pirates together with a thousand other dangers and shipwrecks upon sea and land. So it is, good daughter, that all my wandering voyages

have not been altogether unprofitable. For besides the incredible contention received ordinarily in mind, I have gathered some particular fruit, whereof by the grace of God you shall shortly feel some experience. I have proved the secret properties of stones, of plants, metals, and other things hidden within the bowels of the earth, wherewith I am able to help myself against the common law of men, when necessity doth serve: specially in things wherein I know mine eternal God to be least offended. For as thou knowest, I being approached as it were, even to the brim of my grave, and that the time draweth near for yielding of mine account before the Auditor of all Auditors, I ought therefore to have some deep knowledge and apprehension of God's judgment more than I had when the heat of inconsiderate youth did boil within my lusty body. Know you, therefore, good daughter, that with those graces and favours which the heavens prodigally have bestowed upon me, I have learned and proved of long time the composition of a certain paste, which I make of divers soporiferous simples, which beaten afterwards to powder and drunk with a quantity of water, within a quarter of an hour after, bringeth the receiver into such a sleep, and burieth so deeply the senses and other spirits of life, that the cunningest physician will judge the party dead: and besides that, it hath a more marvellous effect, for the person which useth the same feeleth no kind of grief, and according to the quantity of the dough, the patient remaineth in a sweet sleep, but when the operation is wrought and done, he returneth into his first estate. Now then, Julietta, receive mine instruction, put off

all feminine affection by taking upon you a manly stomach for by the only courage of your mind consisteth the hap or mishap of your affairs. Behold, here I give you a vial which you shall keep as your own proper heart, and the night before your marriage, or in the morning before day, you shall fill the same up with water, and drink so much as is contained therein. And then you shall feel a certain kind of pleasant sleep which encroaching by little and little all the parts of your body, will constrain them in such wise, as immovable they shall remain: and by not doing their accustomed duties, shall lose their natural feelings, and you abide in such ecstasy the space of forty hours at the least, without any beating of pulse or other perceptible motion, which shall so astonie them that come to see you, as they will judge you to be dead, and according to the custom of our city, you shall be carried to the churchyard hard by our church, where you shall be entombed in the common monument of the Capellets, your ancestors, and in the meantime we will send word to Lord Romeo by a special messenger of the effect of our device, who now abideth at Mantua. And the night following I am sure he will not fail to be here, then he and I together will open the grave, and lift up your body, and after the operation of the powder is past, he shall convey you secretly to Mantua, unknown to all your parents and friends. Afterwards (it may be), Time, the mother of Truth shall cause concord between the offended city of Verona and Romeo. At which time your common cause may be made open to the general contention of all your friends." The words of the good father ended, new

joy surprised the heart of Julietta, who was so attentive to his talk as she forgot no one point of her lesson. Then she said unto him : “ Father, doubt not at all that my heart shall fail in performance of your commandment : for were it the strongest poison or most pestiferous venom, rather would I thrust it into my body than to consent to fall in the hands of him whom I utterly mislike : with a right strong reason then may I fortify myself, and offer my body to any kind of mortal danger to approach and draw near to him, upon whom wholly dependeth my life and all the solace I have in this world.” “ Go your ways then, my daughter ” (quoth the Friar) “ the mighty hand of God keep you, and His surpassing power defend you and confirm that will and good mind of yours, for the accomplishment of this work.” Julietta departed from Friar Lawrence and returned home to her father’s palace about two of the clock, where she found her mother at the gate attending for her, and in good devotion demanded if she continued still in those former follies. But Julietta with more gladsome cheer than she was wont to use, not suffering her mother to ask again, said unto her : “ Madam, I come from St. Francis’ Church, where I have tarried longer peradventure than my duty requireth : howbeit not without fruit and great rest to my afflicted conscience, by reason of the godly persuasions of our ghostly father Friar Lawrence, unto whom I have made a large declaration of my life. And chiefly have communicated unto him in confession, that which hath passed between my lord my father and you, upon the marriage of Count Paris and me. But the good man hath reconciled me by

his holy words and commendable exhortations, that where I had mind never to marry, now I am well disposed to obey your pleasure and commandment. Wherefore, madam, I beseech you, to recover the favour and good will of my father, ask pardon in my behalf, and say unto him (if it please you) that by obeying his fatherly request, I am ready to meet the Count Paris at Villafranco, and there in your presence to accept him for my lord and husband : in assurance whereof, by your patience, I mean to repair into my closet, to make choice of my most precious jewels, that I being richly adorned and decked, may appear before him more agreeable to his mind and pleasure. The good mother rapt with exceeding much joy, was not able to answer a word, but rather made speed to seek out her husband the Lord Antonio, unto whom she reported the good will of her daughter, and how by means of Friar Lawrence her mind was changed. Whereof the good old man marvellous joyful, praised God in heart, saying : “ Wife, this is not the first good turn which we have received of that holy man, unto whom every citizen of this commonwealth is dearly bound. I would to God that I had redeemed twenty of his years with the third part of my goods, so grievous is to me his extreme old age.” The self same hour the Lord Antonio went to seek the Count Paris, whom he thought to persuade to go to Villafranco. But the Count told him again that the charge would be too great, and that better it were to reserve that cost to the marriage day, for the better celebration of the same. Notwithstanding, if it were his pleasure, he would himself go visit Julietta : and so they went

together. The mother advertised of his coming, caused her daughter to make herself ready, and to spare no costly jewels for adorning of her beauty against the Count's coming, which she bestowed so well for garnishing of her personage, that before the Count parted from the house, she had so stolen away his heart, as he lived not from that time forth but upon meditation of her beauty, and slacked no time for acceleration of the marriage day, ceasing not to be importunate upon father and mother, for the end and consummation thereof. And thus with joy enough passed forth this day and many others until the day before the marriage, against which time the mother of Julietta did so well provide that there wanted nothing to set forth the magnificence and nobility of their house. Villafranco whereof we have made mention was a place of pleasure, where the Lord Antonio was wont many times to recreate himself a mile or two from Verona, there the dinner was prepared, forasmuch as the ordinary solemnity of necessity must be done at Verona. Julietta perceiving her time to approach dissembled the matter so well as she could: and when time forced her to retire to her chamber, her woman would have waited upon her, and have lain in her chamber, as her custom was: but Julietta said unto her: "Good and faithful mother, you know that tomorrow is my marriage day, and for that I would spend the most part of the night in prayer, I pray you for this time to let me alone, and tomorrow in the morning about six of the clock come to me again to help make me ready." The good old woman, willing to follow her mind, suffered her alone, and doubted nothing of that

which she did mean to do. Julietta being within her chamber having an ewer full of water standing upon the table, filled the vial which the friar gave her : and after she had made the mixture, she set it by her bedside, and went to bed. And being laid, new thoughts began to assail her, with a conceit of grievous death, which brought her into such case as she could not tell what to do, but plaining incessantly, said : “ Am not I the most unhappy and desperate creature that ever was born of woman ? For me there is nothing left in this wretched world but mishap, misery and mortal woe, my distress hath brought me to such extremity, as to save mine honour and conscience, I am forced to devour the drink whereof I know not the virtue : but what know I, (said she) whether the operation of this powder will be too soon or too late, or not correspondent to the due time, and that my fault being discovered, I shall remain a fable to the people ? What know I moreover, if the serpents and other venomous and crawling worms which commonly frequent the graves and pits of the earth will hurt me, thinking that I am dead ? But how shall I endure the stench of so many carrions and bones of my ancestors which rest in the grave, if by fortune I do awake before Romeo and Friar Lawrence do come to help me ? ” And as she was thus plunged in the deep contemplation of things, she thought that she saw a certain vision or fancy of her cousin Thibault, in the very same sort as she saw him wounded and imbrued with blood, and musing how that she must be buried quick amongst so many dead carcases and deadly naked bones, her tender and delicate body began to shake

and tremble, and her yellow locks to stare for fear, in such wise as frightened with terror, a cold sweat began to pierce her heart and bedew the rest of all her members, in such wise as she thought an hundred thousand deaths did stand about her, haling her about on every side, and plucking her in pieces, and feeling that her forces diminished by little and little, fearing that through too great debility she was not able to do her enterprise, like a furious and insensate woman, without further care gulped up the water within the vial, then crossing her arms upon her stomach, she lost at that instant all the powers of her body, resting in a trance. And when the morning light began to thrust his head out of his orient, her chamber woman which had locked her in with the key, did open the door, and thinking to awake her, called her many times, and said unto her : "Mistress, you sleep too long, the Count Paris will come to raise you." The poor old woman spake unto the wall and sang a song unto the deaf. For if all the horrible and tempestuous sounds of the world had been cannoned forth out of the greatest bombards and sounded through her delicate ears, her spirits of life were so fast bound and stopped as she by no means could awake, wherewith the poor old woman amazed, began to shake her by the arms and hands, which she found so cold as marble stone. Then putting hand unto her mouth, suddenly perceived that she was dead, for she perceived no breath in her. Wherefore like a woman out of her wits, she ran to tell her mother, who so mad as a tiger bereft of her fawns, hied herself into her daughter's chamber, and in that pitiful state beholding her daughter, thinking her

to be dead, cried out : “ Ah, cruel death, which hast ended all my joy and bliss, use the last scourge of thy wrathful ire against me, lest by suffering me to live the rest of my woeful days, my torment do increase.” Then she began to fetch such straining sighs, as her heart did seem to cleave in pieces. And as her cries began to increase, behold the father, the Count Paris, and a great troop of gentlemen and ladies which were come to honour the feast, hearing no sooner tell of that which chanced, were struck into such sorrowful dumps, as he which had beheld their faces would easily have judged that the same had been a day of ire and pity, specially the Lord Antonio’s, whose heart was frapped with such surpassing woe as neither tear nor word could issue forth, and knowing not what to do, straightway sent to seek the most expert physicians of the town, who after they had enquired of the life passed of Julietta, deemed by common report that melancholy was the cause of that sudden death, and then their sorrows began to renew afresh. And if ever day was lamentable, piteous, unhappy and fatal, truly it was that wherein Julietta her death was published in Verona : for she was so bewailed of great and small, that by the common plaints the commonwealth seemed to be in danger, and not without cause : for besides her natural beauty (accompanied with many virtues wherewith nature had enriched her) she was else so humble, wise and debonair, as for that humility and courtesy she had stolen away the hearts of every wight, and there was none but did lament her misfortune. And whilst these things were in this lamented state, Friar Lawrence with diligence

dispatched a friar of his convent, named Friar Anselm, whom he trusted as himself, and delivered him a letter written with his own hand, commanding him expressly not to give the same to any other but to Romeo, wherein was contained the chance which had passed between him and Julietta, specially the virtue of the powder, and commanded him the next ensuing night to speed himself to Verona, for that the operation of the powder that time would take end, and that he should carry with him back again to Mantua his beloved Julietta in dissembled apparel, until Fortune had otherwise provided for them. The friar made such haste as too late he arrived at Mantua, within a while after. And because the manner of Italy is, that the friar travelling abroad ought to take a companion of his convent to do his affairs within the city, the friar went into his convent, and for that he was within, it was not lawful for him to come out again that day, because that certain days before, one religious of that convent as it was said did die of the plague: wherefore the magistrates appointed for the health and visitation of the sick, commanded the warden of the house that no friars should wander abroad the city, or talk with any citizen, until they were licensed by the officers in that behalf appointed, which was the cause of the great mishap which you shall hear hereafter. The friar being in this perplexity, not able to go forth and not knowing what was contained in the letter, deferred his journey for that day. Whilst things were in this plight, preparation was made at Verona to do the obsequies of Julietta. There is a custom also (which is common in Italy) to lay all the best of one lineage

and family in one tomb, whereupon Julietta was entombed in the ordinary grave of the Capellets, in a churchyard hard by the church of the friars, where also the Lord Thibault was interred, whose obsequies honourably done, every man returned: whereunto Pietro, the servant of Romeo, gave his assistance: for as we have before declared, his master sent him back again from Mantua to Verona, to do his father service, and to advertise him of that which should happen in his absence there: who seeing the body of Julietta enclosed in tomb, thinking with the rest that she had been dead indeed, incontinently took post-horse, and with diligence rode to Mantua, where he found his master in his wonted house, to whom he said with his eyes full of tears: “Sir, there is chanced unto you so strange a matter, as if so be you do not arm yourself with constancy, I am afraid that I shall be the cruel minister of your death: be it known unto you, sir, that yesterday morning my mistress Julietta left her life in this world to seek rest in another: and with these eyes I saw her buried in the church-yard of St. Francis’.” At the sound of which heavy message, Romeo began woefully to lament, as though his spirits, grieved with the torment of his passion, at that instant would have abandoned his body. But strong love, which would not permit him to faint until the extremity, framed a thought in his fantasy, that if it were possible for him to die beside her, his death should be more glorious, and she (as he thought) better contented: by reason whereof, after he had washed his face for fear to discover his sorrow, he went out of his chamber, and commanded his man to tarry behind him, that he might walk throughout all

the corners of the city, to find proper remedy (if it were possible) for his grief. And amongst others, beholding an apothecary's shop of little furniture and less store of boxes and other things requisite for that science, thought that the very poverty of the master apothecary would make him willingly yield to that which he pretended to demand: and after he had taken him aside, secretly said unto him: "Sir, if you be the master of the house, as I think you be, behold here fifty ducats, which I give you to the intent you deliver me some strong and violent poison, that within a quarter of an hour is able to procure death unto him that shall use it." The covetous apothecary enticed by gain, agreed to his request, and feigning to give him some other medicine before the people's face, he speedily made ready a strong and cruel poison: afterwards he said unto him softly: "Sir, I give you more than is needful, for the one half is able to destroy the strongest man of the world :" who after he had received the poison, returned home, where he commanded his man to depart with diligence to Verona, and that he should make provision of candles, a tinder box and other instruments meet for the opening of the grave of Julietta, and that above all things, he should not fail to await his coming besides the churchyard of St. Francis', and upon pain of life to keep his intent in silence. Which Pietro obeyed in order as his master had required, and made therein such expedition as he arrived in good time to Verona, taking order for all things that were commanded of him. Romeo in the meanwhile being solicited with mortal thoughts caused ink and paper to be brought unto him, and in few words

put in writing all the discourse of his love, the marriage of him and Julietta, the mean observed for consummation of the same, the help that he had of Friar Lawrence, the buying of his poison, and last of all his death. Afterwards, having finished his heavy tragedy, he closed the letters and sealed the same with his seal, and directed the superscription thereof to his father: and putting the letters into his purse, he mounted on horseback, and used such diligence as he arrived upon dark night at the city of Verona, before the gates were shut, where he found his servant tarrying for him with a lantern and instruments, as is before said, meet for the opening of the grave, unto whom he said: “Pietro, help me to open this tomb, and so soon as it is open, I command thee upon pain of thy life not to come near me, nor to stay me from the thing I purpose to do. Behold, there is a letter which thou shalt present tomorrow in the morning to my father at his uprising, which peradventure shall please him better than thou thinkest.” Pietro not able to imagine what was his master’s intent, stood somewhat aloof to behold his master’s gests and countenance. And when they had opened the vault, Romeo descended down two steps, holding the candle in his hand, and began to behold with pitiful eye, the body of her, which was the organ of his eyes, and kissed it tenderly, holding it hard between his arms, and not able to satisfy himself with her sight, put his fearful hands upon the cold stomach of Julietta. And after he had touched her in many places, and not able to feel any certain judgment of life, he drew the poison out of his box, and swallowing

down a great quantity of the same, cried out : “ O Julietta, of whom the world was unworthy, what death is it possible my heart could choose out more agreeable than that which it suffereth hard by thee ? What grave more glorious than to be buried in thy tomb ? What more worthy or excellent epitaph can be vowed for memory than the mutual and pitiful sacrifice of our lives ? ” And thinking to renew his sorrow, his heart began to fret through the violence of the poison, which by little and little assailed the same, and looking about him, espied the body of the Lord Thibault lying next unto Julietta, which as yet was not altogether putrified, and speaking to the body as though it had been alive, said : “ In what place so ever thou art, O cousin Thibault, I most heartily do cry thee mercy for the offence which I have done by depriving of thy life : and if thy ghost do wish and cry out for vengeance upon me, what greater or more cruel satisfaction canst thou desire to have, or henceforth hope for, than to see him which murdered thee, to be empoisoned with his own hands and buried by thy side ? ” Then ending his talk, feeling by little and little that his life began to fail, falling prostrate upon his knees, with feeble voice he softly said : “ O my Lord God, which to redeem me didst descend from the bosom of Thy Father, and tookest human flesh in the womb of the Virgin, I acknowledge and confess that this body of mine is nothing else but earth and dust.” Then seized upon with desperate sorrow, he fell down upon the body of Julietta with such vehemence as the heart, faint and attenuated with too great torments, not able to bear so hard a violence, was abandoned of all his sense

and natural powers, in such sort as the siege of his soul failed him at that instant, and his members stretched forth remained stiff and cold. Friar Lawrence which knew the certain time of the powder's operation, marvelled that he had no answer of the letter which he sent to Romeo by his fellow Friar Anselm, departed from St. Francis' and with instruments for the purpose, determined to open the grave to let in air to Julietta which was ready to wake: and approaching the place, he espied a light within, which made him afraid until that Pietro which was hard by, had certified him that Romeo was within, and had not ceased there to lament and complain the space of half an hour: and when they two were entered into the grave and finding Romeo without life, made such sorrow as they can well conceive which love their dear friend with like perfection. And as they were making their complaints, Julietta rising out of her trance and beholding light within the tomb, uncertain whether it were a dream or fantasy that appeared before her eyes, coming again to herself, knew Friar Lawrence, unto whom she said: "Father, I pray thee in the name of God to perform thy promise, for I am almost dead." And then Friar Lawrence, concealing nothing from her, (because he feared to be taken through his too long abode in that place) faithfully rehearsed unto her how he had sent Friar Anselm to Romeo at Mantua, from whom as yet he had received no answer. Notwithstanding, he found Romeo dead in the grave, whose body he pointed unto, lying hard by her, praying her sith it was so, patiently to bear that sudden misfortune, and that if it pleased her, he would convey her into some monastery of women

where she might in time moderate her sorrow and give rest unto her mind. Julietta had no sooner cast eye upon the dead corpse of Romeo, but began to break the fountain pipes of gushing tears, which ran forth in such abundance, as not able to support the furor of her grief, she breathed without ceasing upon his mouth, and then throwing herself upon his body and embracing it very hard, seemed that by force of sighs and sobs, she would have revived and brought him again to life, and after she had kissed and rekissed him a million of times, she cried out : “ Ah, the sweet rest of my cares and the only port of all my pleasures and pastimes, hadst thou so sure a heart to choose thy churchyard in this place between the arms of thy perfect lover, and to end the course of thy life for my sake in the flower of thy youth when life to thee should have been most dear and delectable ? How had this tender body power to resist the furious combat of death, very death itself here present ? How could thy tender and delicate youth willingly permit that thou shouldest approach into this filthy and infected place, where from henceforth thou shalt be the pasture of worms unworthy of thee ? Alas, alas, by what means shall I now renew my plaints, which time and long patience ought to have buried and clearly quenched ? Ah, I, miserable and caitiff wretch, thinking to find remedy for my griefs, have sharpened the knife that hath given me this cruel blow, whereof I receive the cause of mortal wound. Ah, happy and fortunate grave which shalt serve in world to come for witness of the most perfect alliance that ever was between two most unfortunate lovers, receive now the last

sobbing sighs and entertainment of the most cruel of all the cruel subjects of ire and death.” And as she thought to continue her complaints, Pietro advertised Friar Lawrence that he heard a noise beside the citadel, wherewith being afraid, they speedily departed, fearing to be taken: and then Julietta, seeing herself alone and in full liberty, took again Romeo between her arms, kissing him with such affection as she seemed to be more attainted with love than death, and drawing out the dagger which Romeo wore by his side, she pricked herself with many blows against the heart, saying with feeble and pitiful voice: “ Ah death, the end of sorrow and beginning of felicity, thou art most heartily welcome: fear not at this time to sharpen thy dart: give no longer delay of life, for fear that my spirit travail not to find Romeo’s ghost amongst such number of carrion corpses: and thou, my dear lord and loyal husband Romeo, if there rest in thee any knowledge, receive her whom thou hast so faithfully loved, the only cause of thy violent death, which frankly offereth up her soul that none but thou shalt joy the love whereof thou hast made so lawful conquest, and that our souls passing from this light, may eternally live together in the place of everlasting joy.” And when she had ended those words she yielded up her ghost. While these things thus were done, the guard and watch of the city by chance passed by, and seeing light within the grave, suspected straight that there were some necromancers which had opened the tomb to abuse the dead bodies for aid of their art: and desirous to know what it meant, went down into the vault where they found Romeo and Julietta, with their arms embracing each

other's neck, as though there had been some token of life. And after they had well viewed them at leisure, they perceived in what case they were : and then all amazed they sought for the thieves which (as they thought) had done the murder, and in the end found the good father Friar Lawrence, and Pietro the servant of dead Romeo (which had hid themselves under a stall) whom they carried to prison, and advertised the Lord of Escala and the magistrates of Verona of the horrible murder, which by and by was published throughout the city. Then flocked together all the citizens, women and children, leaving their houses to look upon that pitiful sight, and to the end that in presence of the whole city the murderer should be known, the magistrates ordained that the two dead bodies should be erected upon a stage to the view and sight of the whole world, in such sort and manner as they were found within the grave, and that Pietro and Friar Lawrence should publicly be examined, that afterwards there might be no murmur or other pretended cause of ignorance. And this good old friar, being upon the scaffold, having a white beard all wet and bathed with tears, the judges commanded him to declare unto them who were the authors of that murder, sith at an untimely hour, he was apprehended with certain irons beside the grave. Friar Lawrence, a round and frank man of talk, nothing moved with that accusation, answered them with stout and bold voice : " My masters, there is none of you all (if you have respect unto my forepassed life and to my aged years, and therewithal have consideration of this heavy spectacle, whereunto unhappy fortune hath presently brought

me) but doth greatly marvel of so sudden mutation and change unlooked for so much as these three score and ten or twelve years sithence I came into this world and began to prove the vanities thereof, I was never suspected, touched or found guilty of any crime which was able to make me blush, or hide my face, although (before God) I do confess myself to be the greatest and most abominable sinner of all the redeemed flock of Christ. So it is notwithstanding, that sith I am prest and ready to render mine account, and that death, the grave and worms do daily summon this wretched corpse of mine to appear before the justice seat of God, still waiting and attending to be carried to my hoped grave, this is the hour I say, as you likewise may think wherein I am fallen to the greatest damage and prejudice of my life and honest port, and that which hath engendered this sinister opinion of me may peradventure be these great tears which in abundance trickle down my face, as though the Holy Scriptures do not witness that Jesus Christ moved with human pity and compassion, did weep and pour forth tears, and that many times tears be the faithful messengers of a man's innocence. Or else the most likely evidence and presumption is the suspected hour which (as the magistrate doth say) doth make me culpable of the murder, as though all hours were not indifferently made equal by God their Creator, who in his own person declareth unto us that there be twelve hours in the day, showing thereby that there is no exception of hours nor of minutes, but that one may do either good or ill at all times indifferently, as the party is guided or forsaken by the spirit of

God: touching the irons which were found about me, needful it is not now to let you understand for what use iron was first made, and that of itself it is not able to increase in man either good or evil, if not by the mischievous mind of him which doth abuse it. Thus much I have thought good to tell you, to the intent that neither tears nor iron, ne yet suspected hour are able to make me guilty of the murder or make me otherwise than I am, but only the witness of mine own conscience, which alone if I were guilty should be the accuser, the witness and the hangman, which, by reason of mine age and the reputation I have had amongst you, and the little time that I have to live in this world should more torment me within, than all the mortal pains that could be devised: but (thanks be to mine eternal God) I feel no worm that gnaweth nor any remorse, that pricketh me touching that fact, for which I see you all troubled and amazed: and to set your hearts at rest, and to remove the doubts which hereafter may torment your consciences, I swear unto you by all the heavenly parts wherein I hope to be, that forthwith I will disclose from first to last the entire discourse of this pitiful tragedy, which peradventure shall drive you into no less wonder and amaze, than those two poor passionate lovers were strong and patient to expone themselves to the mercy of death for the fervent and indissoluble love between them." Then the fatherly Friar began to repeat the beginning of the love between Julietta and Romeo which by certain space of time confirmed, was prosecuted by words at the first, then by mutual promise of marriage, unknown to the world. And as within

few days after, the two lovers feeling themselves sharpened and incited with stronger onset, repaired unto him under colour of confession, protesting by oath that they were both married, and that if he would not solemnise that marriage in the face of the Church, they should be constrained to offend God to live in disordered lust: in consideration whereof, and specially seeing their alliance to be good and comfortable in dignity, riches, and nobility on both sides, hoping by that means perchance to reconcile the Monteschs and Capellets, and that by doing such an acceptable work to God, he gave them the Church's blessing in a certain chapel of the Friars' Church whereof the night following they did consummate the marriage fruits in the palace of the Capellets. For testimony of which copulation, the woman of Julietta's chamber was able to depose: adding moreover, the murder of Thibault which was cousin to Julietta: by reason whereof the banishment of Romeo did follow, and how in the absence of the said Romeo, the marriage being kept secret between them, a new matrimony was entreated with the Count Paris, which disliked by Julietta, she fell prostrate at his feet in a chapel of St. Francis' Church, with full determination to have killed herself with her own hands, if he gave her not counsel how she should avoid the marriage agreed between her father and the Count Paris. For conclusion he said that although he was resolved by reason of his age and nearness of death to abhor all secret sciences wherein in his younger years he had delight, notwithstanding, pressed with importunity and moved with pity, fearing lest Julietta should do some cruelty against herself, he strained his

conscience and chose rather with some little fault to grieve his mind, than to suffer the young gentlewoman to destroy her body and hazard the danger of her soul: and therefore he opened some part of his ancient cunning and gave her a certain powder to make her sleep, by means whereof she was thought to be dead. Then he told them how he had sent Friar Anselm to carry letters to Romeo of their enterprise, whereof hitherto he had no answer. Then briefly he concluded how he found Romeo dead within the grave who as it is most likely did empoinson himself, or was otherwise smothered or suffocated with sorrow by finding Julietta in that state, thinking she had been dead. Then he told them how Julietta did kill herself with the dagger of Romeo to bear him company after his death, and how it was impossible for them to save her for the noise of the watch which forced them to flee from thence. And for more ample approbation of his saying he humbly besought the Lord of Verona and the magistrates to send to Mantua for Friar Anselm to know the cause of his slack return, that the content of the letter sent to Romeo might be seen: to examine the woman of the chamber of Julietta, and Pietro the servant of Romeo, who not attending for a further request, said unto them: "My lords, when Romeo entered the grave, he gave me this packet written as I suppose with his own hand, who gave me express commandment to deliver it to his father." The packet opened, they found the whole effect of this story, specially the apothecary's name which sold him the poison, the price, and the cause wherefore he used it, and all appeared to be so clear and evident,

as there rested nothing for the further verification of the same, but their presence at the doing of the particulars thereof, for the whole was so well declared in order, as they were out of doubt that the same was true: and then the Lord Bartholomew of Escala, after he had debated with the magistrates of these events, decreed that the woman of Julietta her chamber should be banished, because she did conceal that privy marriage from the father of Romeo, which if it had been known in time, had bred to the whole city an universal benefit. Pietro, because he obeyed his master's commandment, and kept close his lawful secrets according to the well-conditioned nature of a trusty servant, was set at liberty. The apothecary taken, racked, and found guilty, was hanged. The good old man Friar Lawrence, as well for respect of his ancient service which he had done to the commonwealth of Verona, as also for his virtuous life (for the which he was specially recommended) was let go in peace without any note of infamy. Notwithstanding, by reason of his age he voluntarily gave over the world and closed himself in an hermitage two miles from Verona, where he lived five or six years, and spent his time in continual prayer until he was called out of this transitory world into the blissful state of everlasting joy. And for the compassion of so strange a misfortune, the Monteschés and the Capellets poured forth such abundance of tears, as with the same they did evacuate their ancient grudge and choler, whereby they were then reconciled: and they which could not be brought to atonement by any wisdom or human counsel, were in the end vanquished and made friends by pity: and to

immortalise the memory of so entire and perfect amity, the Lord of Verona ordained that the two bodies of those miraculous lovers should be fast entombed in the grave where they ended their lives, in which place was erected a high marble pillar honoured with an infinite number of excellent epitaphs which to this day be apparent, with such noble memory, as amongst all the rare excellencies wherewith that city is furnished, there is none more famous than the monument of Romeo and Julietta.

CORIOLANUS

Martius Coriolanus going about to repress the common people of Rome with dearth of corn, was banished. For revengement whereof he persuaded Accius Tullius, king of the Volscians to make wars upon the Romans, and he himself in their aid came in his own person. The city brought to great misery, the fathers devised means to deliver the same and sent unto the Volscian camp the mother, the wife and children of Coriolanus. Upon whose complaints Coriolanus withdrew the Volscians, and the city was reduced to quietness.

IN the year that Titus Geganius and Publius Minutius were Consuls, when all things were quiet abroad and dissension at home appeased, another great mischief invaded the city. First a dearth of victuals, for that the land was untilled by the people's departure ; then a famine such as chanceth to the besieged : which had brought a great destruction of people had not the Consuls forseen the same by provision in foreign places. They sent purveyors into Sicily, but the malice of the cities adjoining stayed the provision that was made afar off. The corn provided at Cumas was stayed for the goods of Tarquinius by Aristodemus the tyrant that was his heir. The next year following a great mass of corn was transported out of Sicily in the time of the Consuls, M. Minutius and A. Sempronius. Then the Senate consulted upon the

distribution of the same unto the people. Divers thought that the time was then come to bridle and suppress the people, that thereby they might the rather recover those privileges which were extorted from the fathers. Amongst whom Martius Coriolanus, a young gentleman, was the chiefest; who, being an enemy to the Tribune authority, said these words. “ If the people will have victuals and corn at that price whereat it was assized and rated in time past, then it is meet and necessary that they render to the fathers their ancient authority and privilege: for to what purpose be the plebeian magistrates ordained? For what consideration shall I suffer myself to be subjugate under the authority of Sicinius as though I were conversant amongst thieves? Shall I abide these injuries any longer to continue than is necessary? I, that could not suffer Tarquinius the king, shall I be patient with Sicinius? Let Sicinius depart if he will; let him draw the people after him; the way yet is open to the sacred hill and to the other mountains. Let them rob us of our corn which they took away from our own land as they did three years past; let them enjoy the victuals which in their fury they did gather; I dare be bold to say thus much, that, being warned and tamed by this present penury, they had rather plough and till the land than they would suffer the same to be uncultured by withdrawing themselves to armour. It is not so easy to be spoken, as I think it may with facility be brought to pass, that upon conditions the prices of victuals should be abated, the fathers might remove the authority of the Tribunes and disannul all those laws which against

their wills were ratified and confirmed." This sentence seemed cruel to the fathers and almost had set the people together by the ears, who would have torn him in pieces, had not the Tribunes appointed a day for his appearance. Whereupon their fury for that time was appeased, Coriolanus, seeing the people's rage to increase and considering that they should be his judge when the day of his appearance was come, he absented himself and therefore was condemned. Then he fled to the Volscians, of whom he was gently entertained and lodged in the house of Accius Tullius, the chief of that city and a deadly enemy to the Romans. Upon daily conference and consultation had between them they consulted by what sleight or policy they might commence a quarrel against the Romans. And because they doubted that the Volscians would not easily be persuaded thereunto, being so oft vanquished and ill entreated, they excogitated some other new occasion. In the meantime T. Latinus, one of the plebeian sort, perceiving that the Romans went about to institute great pastimes, conceived a dream wherein he saw Jupiter to speak unto him, and said that he liked not the towardness of those games and in case the same were not celebrated with great royalty and magnificence they would engender peril to the city; which dream he declared to the Consuls. Then the Senate gave order that the same should be addressed with great pomp and triumph: whereunto through the instigation of Accius a great number of the Volscians resorted. But before the plays begun, Tullius, according to the compact agreed upon between him and Coriolanus, secretly repaired to the Consuls, and

taking them aside declared that he had to say unto them a matter touching the public wealth of their city, in these words : “ I am forced against my will to signify unto you a matter that toucheth the condition of mine own subjects and countrymen. I come not to accuse them as though they had already admitted anything, but I come to give you a premonition lest they should perpetuate some occasion contrary to the order of your city. The disposition of my countrymen is more inconstant than I would wish, which we have felt to our great loss and decay. The cause of our security at this present, is rather suffered by your patience than by our desert. Here be at this instant a great multitude of Volscians ; here be games prepared and the city thoroughly bent to behold them. I do remember what was done upon like occasion in this city by the Roman youth ; I tremble to think what may be rashly attempted. Wherefore I thought good both for your own sakes and for avoiding of mutual displeasure to foretell you of these things. And for mine own part I purpose immediately to return home because I will avoid the danger and peril that may chance by my presence.” When he had spoken those words, he departed. The Consuls immediately recounted the request of Accius to the Senate, who, more esteeming the personage from whence the same did proceed than the matter that was spoken, determined to provide a remedy for the same and immediately caused the Volscians to avoid the city, sending officers about to command them to depart that night. Upon which sudden edict at the first they began to marvel and afterwards they conceived great grief and offence for

that their unneighbourly entertainment. And as they were passing out of the city in a long train, Tullius being upon the top of the hill called Ferrentine to wait for the people, as they passed by, called unto him the chief and principal personages to provoke them to take that advantage. Then assembled the multitude in the valley hard by the highway; to whom he pronounced these words: “ Forgetting all injuries and displeasures passed, done by the Roman people against the Volscians, how can you abide the shame you suffer this day, wherein to our great reproach, they begin to ostentate and show forth their plays? Do not you believe that even today they triumph over you? Is not your departure, think ye, ridiculous to all the Romans, to strangers and other cities adjoining? Be not your wives and children, trow ye, now passing homewards, laughed to scorn? What think ye yourselves to be which were warned to depart at the sound of the trumpet? What, suppose ye, will all they think which do meet this multitude retiring homewards to their great reproach and shame? Truly except there be some secret occasion whereby we should be suspected to violate the plays or commit some other crime and so forced to relinquish the company and fellowship of the honest, I know not what should be the cause of this repulse. Were we living when we made such festination to depart—if it may be called a departure and not a running away or shameful retire? I perceive ye did not account this to be a city of our enemies, where I think if ye had tarried but one day longer ye had all been slain. They have denounced wars upon you, which if you be

men of courage shall redound to the utter destruction of them which first gave the defiance. The Volscians perceiving themselves greatly derided, for considerations before remembered determined by common accord to infer wars upon the Romans, under the conduction of Accius Tullius and Coriolanus. After they had recovered divers of the Roman cities they proceeded further and in sundry places spoiled and destroyed the same, encamping themselves five miles from Rome beside the trenches called Fossas Cluilias. In the meantime contention rose between the people and the fathers ; howbeit the fear of foreign parts linked their minds together in the bands of concord. The Consuls and fathers reposed their whole confidence in battle ; which the common people in no wise could abide. Wherefore they were constrained to assemble the Senate ; in which consult was determined that ambassadors should be sent to Coriolanus to demand peace. Who returned them again with a froward answer to this effect : that first they should restore to the Volscians their country which they had conquered, and, that done, he willed them to seek for peace. Yet they sent again ambassadors, but in no wise they were suffered to come into their camp. Then the priests, clad in their ornaments and other divine furniture were sent humbly to make petition for peace ; and yet they could not persuade them. Then the Roman dames repaired to Veturia the mother of Coriolanus and to his wife Volumnia. But whether the same was done by common consent or by the advice of the feminine kind it is uncertain. It was appointed that Veturia, being an ancient gentlewoman and mother of

Coriolanus, and Volumnia his wife with her two young children, should repair to the camp, to the intent that they by their pitiful lamentation might defend the city, which otherwise by force was not able to be kept. At their arrival, Veturia was known by one of her son's familiar friends standing between her daughter in law and her two nephews, who carried word immediately to Coriolanus how his mother, his wife and children were come into the camp to speak with him. Coriolanus, hearing him say so, descended from his seat like one not well in his wits and went forth to embrace his mother. The old gentlewoman from supplications fell into a great rage, speaking these words : “ Abide awhile before I do receive thy embracements ; let me know whether I am come to mine enemy, or to my son ; or whether I am a prisoner in thy camp, or thy mother. Alack, how long have I prolonged these ancient years and hoar hairs most unhappy, that now first I do behold thee an exile and then view thee mine enemy. Canst thou find in thy heart to depopulate and destroy this thy country wherein thou wast begotten and brought up ? Could not thy rage and fury be appeased when thou didst first put foot into the limits of this thy country ? Did not natural zeal pierce thy cruel heart when thou didst first cast thine eyes upon this city ? Is not the house of thy mother and her domestical gods contained within the walls of yonder city ? Do not thy sorrowful mother, thy dear wife and children, inhabit within the compass of yonder city ? Oh I, cursed creature, if I had never had child, Rome had not been now assailed ! If I had never brought forth a son, I should have laid mine old bones and ended

my life in a free country ! But I could never have sustained or suffered more misery than is now fallen unto me nor never more dishonour than to behold thee in pitiful plight, a traitor to thy native soil. And as I am the most wretched wight of all mothers, so I trust I shall not long continue in that state. If thou proceed in this enterprise, either sudden death or perpetual shame be thy reward ! ” When his mother had ended these words, the whole train of gentlewomen brake into pitiful tears, bitterly bewailing the state of their country. Which doing, they at length did mitigate the stomach of Coriolanus. And when he had embraced his wife and children, he dismissed them. Then he withdrew the Volscian camp from the city and out of the Roman province ; upon the displeasure of which fact, he died. It is said that when he was an old man he used many times to speak and utter this sentence, “ That very miserable it is, for an old man to live in banishment.” The Romans disdained not to attribute to women their due praise ; for in memory of this delivery of their country they erected a temple, *Fortunæ Muliebri*, to Women’s Fortune.

APPIUS AND VIRGINIA

Appius Claudius, one of the Decemviri of Rome, goeth about to ravish Virginia a young maiden. Which endeavour of Appius when her father Virginius understood, being then in the wars, he repaired home to rescue his daughter. One that was betrothed unto her claimed her ; whereupon rose great contention. In the end her own father, to save the shame of his stock, killed her with a butcher's knife and went into the Forum crying vengeance upon Appius. Then, after much contention and rebellion, the Decemviri were deposed.

SPURIUS POSTHUMIUS ALBUS, Aulus Manlius, and P. Sulpitius Camerinus, were sent ambassadors to Athens and commanded to write out the noble laws of Solon and to learn the institutions, orders, and laws of other Greek cities. Upon whose return, the Tribunes were very instant that at length laws might be enacted and confirmed. And for that purpose certain officers were appointed, called Decemviri, with sovereign authority and power to reduce the same into writing which were thought meet and profitable for the commonwealth. The principal and chief of which number was Appius Claudius who committed no less filthy fact than was done by Tarquinius for the rape of Lucrece. The said Appius conceived a libidinous desire to ravish a young virgin, the daughter of one Lucius Virginius, then a captain in the wars at Algidum, a

man of honest and sober life, whose wife was also of right good behaviour and their children accordingly brought up and instructed. They had betrothed their daughter to one L. Icilius of the order of the Tribunes, a man of great stoutness and tried valiance in the cause of the people. This young maid being of excellent beauty, Appius at the first began to woo by gifts and fair promises. But when he saw that she was impregnable, he devised by wicked and cruel policy to obtain her, committing the charge of that enterprise to one of his friends called Marcus Claudius, who went about to prove and maintain that the maid was his bondwoman, and in no wise would give liberty to her friends to have time to answer the process made in that behalf, thinking by that means, in the absence of her father, he might at his pleasure enjoy her. As the virgin was going to school in the Forum, the said Claudius, the minister of mischief, laid hands upon her, claimed her to be his bondwoman, for that she was born of a servile woman, and commanded her to follow him. The maid, being afraid, was amazed; and the nurse that waited upon her cried out. Whereupon the people ran out of their doors to know the cause of the stir. Claudius, seeing the maid like to be rescued by the multitude that was assembled, said that there was no need of that hurly-burly, for that he attempted nothing by force but that he was able to prove by law. Whereupon he cited the maid to appear, her friends promised that she should, according to the law, make her appearance. Being come before the consistory where Appius sat in judgment, Claudius began to tell a tale and process of the cause, whereof

Appius being the devisor understood the effect. The tenor of the tale was that the maid was born in his house and was the daughter of his own bond-woman, who afterwards being stolen away was carried to the house of Virginius and supposed to be his child ; which thing, he said, he was well able to prove and would refer the judgment of his cause to Virginius himself, unto whom the greater part of his injury did appertain. In the meantime, he said that it was meet the maid should follow her master. Whereunto the advocates of the maid replied and said that Virginius was absent about the affairs of the commonwealth, but if he were advertised of the matter they knew well he would be at home within two days after. Wherefore, they said, that it were against equity and justice that process and suit should be made for the claim of children in the absence of the parents, requiring them to defer the matter till the return of the father. Appius, not regarding the justice of the case to the intent he might satisfy his own lust and pleasure, ordained in the meantime that Claudius the assertor and plaintiff should have the keeping and placing of the maid till the father were returned. Against which wrong many did grudge although none durst withstand it. But, as fortune chanced, immediately after that decree and order was so pronounced, Publius Numitorius, the maid's uncle by her mother's side and Icilius her beloved were come home. Upon whose return incontinently Icilius approached near to Appius, and, being put back by the sergeant, he cried out aloud in these words : “ Thou oughtest to put me back from hence, O Appius, with a sword, that

thou mightest without let enjoy the thing thou wouldest have kept close and secret. It is I that purpose to marry this maid, who, I doubt not, is very honest and chaste. Wherefore, call together thy sergeants and cause the rods and axes to be made prest and ready, for I assure thee the spouse of Icilius shall not remain out of her father's house. No! although thou hast taken away from the Roman people their Tribunes' aid and appeals, which be two strong forts and holds of their common liberty. Is authority given thee libidinously to abuse our wives and children? Exercise thy cruelty behind our backs and upon our lives if thou list, so that thou do not contaminate and defile the virtue of chastity. Whereunto, if thou infer any damage or injury I will, for mine own part and for the love of my beloved, cry out for the aid of the Romans that be present, and Virginius shall do the like of the soldiers in the quarrel of his own daughter, and all we together will implore for the succour of gods and men and trust to it that thou shalt not enjoy thy purpose before some of us have lost our lives. Wherefore Appius, I advise thee, take heed in time, for when Virginius doth come he will seek remedy to defend his daughter and will know in what condition and sort she is ordered, if she be referred to the servitude of this man. And for my part, my life shall sooner fail in defending her liberty than my faith to her betrothed." Appius perceiving the constancy of Icilius and that the people was in a great mutiny and stir, deferred the cause of Virginia till the next day, whose friends hoped by that time that her father would be at home. Wherefore with all expedition they addressed mes-

sengers unto him in the camp because the safeguard of his daughter consisted in his presence. In the meantime the assertor required the maid, offering to put in bail. The like offer made Icilius of purpose to contrive and spend the time till the arrival of Virginius. The multitude of their own accords held up their hands, promising to become surety for Icilius ; unto whom he gave thanks, weeping for joy to see their kind behaviour, and said “ I thank you most heartily my beloved friends. Tomorrow I will use your friendly offer but at this present I have sureties sufficient.” Whereupon Virginia was bailed. Then Appius repaired home and wrote to his friends in the camp that in no wise they should give Virginius leave to come to Rome ; which ungracious device came too late and took none effect. Whereupon Virginius returned home and in poor and vile apparel repaired to the Forum ; after whom followed a great number of matrons and advocates. Then he began to require them all of succour and aid, alleging that he was a soldier and one that adventured himself for the safeguard and defence of them all, with suchlike persuasions to the multitude. Semblable words were uttered by Icilius. All which doings being viewed and marked by Appius, in a great fury he ascended the consistory. Then M. Claudius the plaintiff began to renew his suit, and before the father of the maiden could make answer to that plea, Appius gave sentence that the maid was bond. Which sentence seemed so cruel as it appalled the whole multitude. And as Claudius was laying hands upon the virgin, Virginius stepped to Appius and said, “ I have betrothed my daughter to

Icilius and not to thee Appius. My care in the bringing of her up was to marry her and not to suffer her to be violated and deflowered. It is your manner like savage and cruel beasts indifferently thus to use your fleshly affections. I cannot tell whether the multitude here present will support this enormity, but I am sure the armed soldiers and men of war will not suffer it." Marcus Claudius being repulsed by the women and advocates that were present, silence was proclaimed by the trumpet. Then Appius began to declare how he understood that all the night before, certain companies were assembled within the city to excite and move sedition, for which cause he came with armed men, not to hurt any that was quiet, but according to the authority of his office, to bridle and repress those that were troublers of the public state. "Wherefore, go sergeant," quod he, "make room amongst the multitude, that the master may enjoy his servant." Which words he thundered out with great fury, and therewithal the multitude gave place, leaving the poor pucelle to be a prey to the enemy. Her father, seeing that he was void of succour and help, to defend the innocency of his daughter, spake to Appius in this sort: "I first do beseech thee Appius, if I have used any unreasonable words against thee, to pardon me, and to impute the same to the father's grief and sorrow. Suffer me I pray thee, to examine the nurse, in the presence of the wench, of the whole circumstance of this matter, to the intent that if I be but a supposed father, I may depart hence with quiet conscience, satisfied and contented." Virginius having licence to talk with his daughter and nurse, departed aside into a place

called Cloacina where the shops be, now called Tabernæ Novæ, and plucking a sharp knife from a butcher that stood by, he thrust the same to the heart of his daughter, saying, "By this only means, daughter, I can make thee free." And looking again to the judgment seat, he said, "This blood, Appius, I consecrate and bestow upon thee." Which done, with his sword he made way to pass through the throng to convey himself out of the city. Then Icilius and Numitorius took up the dead body and showed it to the people, who cried out upon the wickedness of Appius, bewailing the unhappy beauty of that fair maiden, and deplored the necessity of the father. The women exclaimed in lamentable wise, saying, "Is this the condition and state of them that bring forth children? Be these the rewards of chastity?" with suchlike pitiful cries as women are wont to make upon such heavy and dolorous events. Virginius being arrived in the camp, which then was at the mount Vicelius, with a train of four hundred persons that fled out of the city, showed to the soldiers the bloody knife that killed his daughter; which sight astonished the whole camp in so much as every man demanded what was the cause of that sudden chance. Virginius could not speak for tears, but at length he disclosed unto them the effect of the whole matter, and holding up his hands towards the heavens, said, "I beseech you, dear companions, do not impute the wickedness of Appius Claudius upon me, ne yet that I am a parricide and murderer of mine own children. The life of my dear daughter had been more acceptable to me than mine own life if so be she might

have continued a free woman and an honest virgin. But when I saw she was led to the rape like a bond-woman, I considered that better it were her life to be lost than suffered to live in shame ; wherefore my natural pity was converted to a kind of cruelty. And for mine own part, I do not pass to live long after her if I thought I should not have your help and succour to revenge her death. Consider that yourselves have daughters, sisters and wives ; think not therefore that the fleshly desire of Appius is satisfied with the death of my daughter. And the longer he doth continue in this security, the more unbridled is his appetite. Let the calamity of another be a sufficient document for you to beware like injuries. My wife is dead by natural fate and constellation and because my daughter could continue no longer in honest and chaste life, death is befallen unto her, which although it be miserable, yet the same is honourable. There is now no place in my house for Appius to satisfy his filthy lust ; and I will fail of my purpose if I do not revenge the death of my daughter with so good will upon his flesh as I did discharge the dishonour and servitude of her from his violent and cruel hands." This suclamation and pitiful complaint so stirred the multitude that they promised all to help and relieve his sorrow. Whereupon the whole camp were in a mutiny, and marched in order of battle to the mount Aventine, where Virginius persuaded the soldiers to chose ten principal captains to be head and chief of that enterprise. Which with honourable titles of the field, should be called Tribuni. And Virginius himself being elected the chief Tribune, said these words to the soldiers :

“ I pray you reserve this estimation which you conceive of me until some better time and apter occasion, as well for your commodity as for myself. The death of my daughter will suffer no honour to be pleasant or welcome to me during my life. Moreover in this troubled state of the commonwealth it is not meet for them to be your governors that be subject and occurrent to envy and reproach. If my service shall be profitable unto you when you have thus created me a Tribune, it shall be no less commodious if I do still remain a private man.” When he had spoken those words, they chose ten Tribunes. And like as the camp at the mount Aventine was provoked and stirred to this sedition, even so, by means of Icilius and Numitorius before remembered, the army then being against the Sabines began to revolt and made the like number of Tribunes, which in array of battle marched through the city at the gate Colina, with banner displayed, to join with the camp upon the mount Aventine. And when both the camps were assembled, they chose out two amongst the twenty Tribunes to be their generals, called M. Opicus and Sextus Manilius. The Senate, careful and pensive for these events eftsoons assembled, but no certain determinations was agreed upon. At length they concluded that Valerius and Horatius should be sent to the mount Aventine to persuade the people; but they utterly refused the message unless the Decemviri were first deposed. The Decemviri made answer that they would not give over their authority till such time as those laws were ratified which were treated upon before they were elected to that office. Of all these

contentions the people was advertised by M. Duillius, their Tribune. And when both their armies were joined at the mount Aventine aforesaid all the multitude of the city, men, women, and children, repaired thither in sort that Rome was like a forlorn and abandoned place. The fathers, seeing the city thus relinquished, Horatius and Valerius, with divers of the fathers, exclaimed in this wise: "What do ye expect and look for, ye fathers conscript? Will ye suffer all things to run to extreme ruin and decay? Shall the Decemviri still persist in their stubborn and froward determinations? What manner of government is this, O ye Decemviri, that ye thus lay hold upon and enjoy? Will ye pronounce and make laws within your own houses and the limits of the same? Is it not a shame to see in the Forum a greater number of your catchpolls and sergeants than of other sober and wise citizens? But what will ye do if the enemy upon the sudden doth approach the walls? What will ye do if the people, understanding that we care not for their departure, do in arms assail us? Will ye finish your government with the overthrow of the city? But either we must expel and abandon the people, or else we must admit the Tribunes. We shall sooner want our fathers and senators than they their plebeian officers. They bereaved and took away from us the fathers a new kind of authority which was never seen before, who now feeling the sweetness thereof will never give it over. For we cannot so well temper our authority and government as they be able to seek help and succour." The Decemviri perceiving that they were hated so well of the Senate as of the people, sub-

mitted themselves. And thereupon Valerius and Horatius were sent to the camp to revoke the people upon such conditions as they thought most meet. Then the Decemviri were commanded to take heed of the people's fury. So soon as the commissioners were come to the camp they were received with great joy and gladness of the people, because they were the beginners of that stir, and supposed that they would make an end of the commotion, for which cause they rendered to them their humble thanks. Then Icilius was appointed to speak for the people ; who required to have the authority of the Tribunes restored and their appeal renewed, with restitution of those laws which before the erection of the Decemviri were ratified and confirmed. They demanded also an impunity and free pardon to those that first encouraged and incited the soldiers to that enterprise and the restoring of their liberties. They required to have their enemies the Decemviri to be delivered into their hands, whom they threatened to put to death by fire. Whereunto the commissioners answered in this wise : " Your requests be so reasonable that they ought willingly to be granted—all which ye desire to obtain, as a defence and comfort for your liberty and not to persecute and infest others. Your fury and anger ought rather to be pardoned than permitted or granted. Ye bear a face and seem to detest and hate severity and ye yourselves incur and run headlong into all kind of cruelty, and before ye be made free yourselves ye desire to be lords over your adversaries. Shall our city never be void of tortures and oppressions, sometime of the fathers towards the people, some-

time of the people towards the fathers: you had more need of a shield to defend you than of a sword to fight. That man is of a base state and courage, we suppose, that liveth in a city and beareth himself so upright as neither he inferreth injury to others ne yet suffereth wrong himself! If ye show yourselves so terrible, then it is to be supposed, that after ye have recovered your laws and magistrates and be placed again in your former authority and pre-eminence: ye will also ordain and appoint laws over us that shall concern our lives and goods and every other light matter. But for this present I would wish you to be contented with your former freedom." After the commissioners had willed them to consult upon some determinate answer they returned to Rome to make report to the Senate of the people's requests. The Decemviri perceiving that, contrary to their expectation, no likelihood was of any persecution to be done upon them, condescended to those demands. Appius being a man of nature cruel and malicious, measuring the malice of others by his own malign disposition, spake these words: "I am not ignorant what fortune is now imminent, for I do plainly see that whilst weapons be delivered to our adversaries the combat is deferred against us. With blood envy must be rewarded. I will not any longer delay the time, but deprive myself of the Decemvirate." When the Senate was advertised by the commissioners Valerius and Horatius, of the people's answer, they decreed that the Decemviri should be deposed and that Q. Furius the chief bishop should create three plebeian Tribunes. Wherein also was enacted that the departure of

the people and mutiny of the soldiers should be pardoned.

When these laws were renewed the Decemviri went forth and openly in the assembly deposed themselves, to the great joy and comfort of them all. All which being reported to the people, both the soldiers and the rest of the multitude were summoned to appear before the commissioners, unto whom they spake these words : “ We now beseech you all to return into your country, to your domestical gods, your wives and children, which we trust shall be right good, happy, and profitable unto you and to the commonwealth. But your modesty and sober behaviour, for that no man’s ground is violated and destroyed, considering many things, could not suffice the hugeness of this multitude, that part of modesty, I say, carry with you into the city, to your immortal fame and glory. Get ye therefore to the mount Aventine from whence ye departed, where as in a place most happy, ye renewed the foundations of your ancient liberty, and there ye shall create your Tribunes. The chief bishop shall be present to keep the comitiales.” Then the Roman people made Aulus Virginius, Lucius Icilius and P. Numitorius the Tribunes, who with their assistants first advanced and confirmed the liberty of the people. Afterwards Virginius was appointed to be the accuser and Appius chosen to be the defendant. At the day appointed Appius resorted to the Forum with a great company of young gentlemen of the patricial order, where Virginius began to renew the cruel and abominable fact which Appius committed in the time of his authority, and said : “ Oration was first devised

and found out for ambiguous and doubtful causes ; therefore I will neither consume time in accusing him before you, from whose cruelty ye have by force defended yourselves, nor yet I will suffer him to coin to his former wickedness any impudent answer for his defence. Wherefore Appius, all those things which wickedly and cruelly one upon another thou hast done these two years passed, I do freely forgive thee ; but if thou canst not purge thyself of this one thing, that against the order and form of law, thou thyself being judge, wouldest not suffer the freeman to enjoy the benefit of his freedom during the process made of servitude, I will presently command thee to prison." Appius Claudius being now a prisoner, and perceiving that the just complaints of Virginius did vehemently incite the people to rage and fury, and that the petitions and prayers of his friends in no wise could mollify their hearts, he began to conceive a desperation and within a while after slew himself. Spurius Oppius, also another of the Decemviri, was immediately sent to prison ; who before the day of his judgment, died. The rest also of that order fled into exile ; whose goods were confiscate. M. Claudius also, the assertor, was condemned ; howbeit Virginius was contented he should be banished the city, and then he fled to Tiber. Thus upon the filthy affection of one nobleman issued parricide, murder, rebellion, hatred, depriving of magistrates and great mischiefs succeeding one in another's neck. Whereupon the noble and victorious city was like to be a prey to foreign nations. A goodly document to men of like calling to moderate themselves and their magistery with good and honest life,

thereby to give encouragement of virtue to their vassals and inferiors, who for the most part do imitate and follow the lives and conversation of their superiors.

4

THE DUCHESS OF MALFY

The unfortunate marriage of a gentleman, called Antonio Bologna, with the Duchess of Malfi, and the pitiful death of them both.

THE great honour and authority men have in this world, and the greater their estimation is, the more sensible and notorious are the faults by them committed, and the greater is their slander. In like manner more difficult it is for that man to tolerate and sustain fortune, which all the days of his life hath lived at his ease, if by chance he fall into any great necessity than for him which never felt but woe, mishap, and adversity. Dionysius the Tyrant of Sicily, felt greater pain when he was expelled his kingdom, than Milo did, being banished from Rome : for so much as the one was a sovereign lord, the son of a king, a justiciary on earth, and the other but a simple citizen of a city, wherein the people had laws, and the laws of magistrates were had in reverence. So likewise the fall of a high and lofty tree, maketh greater noise, than that which is low and little. High towers, and stately palaces of princes be seen further off, than the poor cabins, and homely shepherds' sheepcotes : the walls of

lofty cities more aloof do salute the viewers of the same, than the simple caves, which the poor do dig below the mountain rocks. Wherefore it behoveth the noble, and such as have charge of commonwealth, to live an honest life, and bear their port upright, that none have cause to discourse upon their wicked deeds and naughty life. And above all modesty ought to be kept by women, whom as their race, noble birth, authority and name, maketh them more famous, even so their virtue, honesty, chastity, and continency more praiseworthy. And behoveful it is, that like as they wish to be honoured above all other, so their life do make them worthy of that honour, without disgracing their name by deed or word, or blemishing that brightness which may commend the same. I greatly fear that all the princely facts, the exploits and conquests done by the Babylonian queen Semiramis, never was recommended with such praise, as her vice had shame in records by those which left remembrance of ancient acts. Thus I say, because a woman being as it were the image of sweetness, courtesy and shamefastness, so soon as she steppeth out of the right tract, and abandoneth the sweet smell of her duty and modesty, besides the denigration of her honour, thrusteth herself into infinite troubles, causeth ruin of such which should be honoured and praised, if women's allurements solicited them not to folly. I will not here endeavour myself to seek for examples of Samson, Solomon or other, which suffered themselves fondly to be abused by women: and who by means of them be tumbled into great faults, and have incurred greater perils: contenting myself to recite a right pitiful history done

almost in our time, when the French under leading of that notable captain Gaston de Foix, vanquished the force of Spain and Naples at the Journey of Ravenna in the time of the French king called Louis the Twelfth, who married the Lady Mary, daughter to King Henry the Seventh, and sister to the victorious prince of worthy memory King Henry the Eighth, wife (after the death of the said Louis) to the puissant gentleman Charles, late Duke of Suffolk. In the very time then lived a gentleman of Naples called Antonio Bologna, who having been master of household to Frederick of Aragon, sometime King of Naples, after the French had expelled those of Aragon out of that city, the said Bologna retired into France, and thereby recovered the goods, which he possessed in his country. The gentleman besides that he was valiant of his person, a good man of war, and well esteemed amongst the best, had a passing number of good graces, which made him to be loved and cherished of every wight: and for riding and managing of great horse, he had not his fellow in Italy: he could also play exceeding well and trim upon the lute, whose feigning voice so well agreed thereunto, that the most melancholic persons would forget their heaviness, upon hearing of his heavenly noise: and besides these qualities, he was of personage comely, and of good proportion. To be short: nature having travailed and despoiled her treasure house for enriching of him, he had by art gotten that, which made him most happy and worthy of praise, which was, the knowledge of good letters, wherein he was so well trained, as by talk and dispute thereof, he made those to blush that were of

that state and profession. Antonio Bologna having left Frederick of Aragon in France, who expulsed out of Naples was retired to King Louis, went home to his house to live at rest and to avoid trouble, forgetting the delicates of courts and houses of great men, to be the only husband of his own revenue. But what? it is impossible to eschew that which the heavens have determined upon us: or to shun the unhappy which seemeth to follow us, as it were naturally proceeding from our mother's womb: in such wise as many times, he which seemeth the wisest man, guided by misfortune, hasteth himself with stooping head to fall headlong into his death and ruin. Even so it chanced to this Neapolitan gentleman: for in the very same place where he attained his advancement, he received also his diminution and decay, and by that house which preferred him to what he had, he was deprived, both of his estate and life: the discourse whereof you shall understand. I have told you already, that this gentleman was master of the King of Naples's household, and being a gentle person, a good courtier, well trained up, and wise for government of himself in the court and in the service of princes, the Duchess of Malfi thought to entreat him that he would serve her, in that office which he served the king. This Duchess was of the house of Aragon, and sister to the Cardinal of Aragon, which then was a rich and puissant personage. Being resolved and persuaded, that Bologna was devoutly affected to the house of Aragon, as one brought up there from a child: she sent for him home to his house, and upon his repair used unto him these, or like words: "Master Bologna, sith your ill fortune,

nay rather the unhappy of our whole house is such, as your good lord and master hath forgone his state and dignity, and that you therewithal have lost a good master, without other recompence but the praise which every man giveth you for your good service, I have thought good to entreat you to do me the honour, as to take charge of the government of my house, and to use the same, as you did that of the King your master. I know well that the office is too unworthy for your calling ; notwithstanding you be not ignorant what I am, and how near to him in blood, to whom you have been a servant so faithful and loving ; and albeit that I am no queen, endued with greatest revenue, yet with that little portion I have, I bear a princely heart : and such as you by experience do know what I have done, and daily do to those which depart my service, recompensing them according to their pain and travail : magnificence is observed as well in the courts of poor princes, as in the stately palaces of great kings and monarchs. I do remember that I have read of a certain noble gentleman, a Persian born, called Ariobarzanes, who used great examples of courtesy and stoutness towards King Artaxerxes, wherewith the king wondered at his magnificence, and confessed himself to be vanquished : you shall take advice of this request, and in the meantime do think you will not refuse the same, as well for that my demand is just, as also being assured, that our house and race is so well imprinted in your heart, as it is impossible that the memory thereof can be defaced." The gentleman hearing that courteous demand of the Duchess, knowing himself how deeply bound he was

to the name of Aragon, and led by some unknown provocation to his great ill luck, answered her in this wise : “ I would to God, Madam, that with so good reason and equity I were able to make denial of your commandment, as justly you may require the same : wherefore for the bounden duty which I owe to the name and memory of the house of Aragon, I make promise that I shall not only sustain the travail, but also the danger of my life, daily to be offered for your service : but I feel in mind I know not what, which commandeth me to withdraw myself to live alone at home within my little house, and to be content with that I have, forgoing the sumptuous charge of princes’ houses, which life would be well liked of myself, were it not for the fear that you Madam should be discontented with my refusal, and that you should conceive, that I disdained your offered charge, or contemn your court for respect of the great office I bare in the court of the King, my lord and master : for I cannot receive more honour, than to serve her, which is the paragon of that stock and royal race. Therefore at all adventures I am resolved to obey your will, and humbly to satisfy the duty of the charge wherein it pleaseth you to employ me, more to pleasure you for avoiding of displeasure, than for desire I have to live an honourable life in the greatest prince’s house of the world, sith I am discharged from him in whose name resteth my comfort and only stay, thinking to have lived a solitary life, and to pass my years in rest, except it were in the poor ability of my service to that house, whereunto I am bound continually to be a faithful servant. Thus, Madam, you see me to be the readiest man of the

world, to fulfil the request, and accomplish such other service wherein it shall please you to employ me." The Duchess thanked him very heartily, and gave him charge of all her household train, commanding each person to do him such reverence as to herself, and to obey him as the chief of all her family. This lady was a widow, but a passing fair gentlewoman, fine and very young, having a young son under her guard and keeping, left by the deceased Duke her husband, together with the Duchy, the inheritance of her child. Now consider her personage being such, her easy life and delicate bringing up, and her daily view of the youthful trade and manner of courter's life, whether she felt herself pricked with any desire, which burned her heart the more incessantly, as the flames were hidden and covert: from the outward show whereof she stayed herself so well as she could. But she following best advice, rather esteemed the proof of marriage, than to burn with so little fire, or to incur the exchange of lovers, as many unshamefast strumpets do, which be rather given over, than satisfied with pleasure of love. And to say the truth, they be not guided by wisdom's lore, which suffer a maiden ripe for marriage to be long unwedded, or young wife long to live in widow's state, what assurance so ever they make of their chaste and staid life. For books be too full of such enterprises, and houses stored with examples of such stolen and secret practices, as there need no further proof for assurance of our cause, the daily experience maketh plain and manifest. And a great folly it is to build the fantasies of chastity amid the follies of worldly pleasures. I will not go about to make those

matters impossible, ne yet will judge at large, but that there be some maidens and wives, which wisely can contain themselves amongst the troop of amorous suitors. But what? the experience is very hard and the proof no less dangerous, and perchance in a moment the mind of some perverted, which all their living days have closed their ears from the suit of those that have made offer of loving service. And hereof we need not run to foreign histories, ne yet to seek records that be ancient, sith we may see the daily effects of the like, practised in noble houses, and courts of kings and princes. That this is true, example of this fair Duchess, who was moved with that desire which pricketh others that be of flesh and bone. This lady waxed very weary of lying alone, and grieved her heart to be without a match, specially in the night, when the secret silence and darkness of the same presented before the eyes of her mind, the image of the pleasure which she felt in the lifetime of her deceased lord and husband, whereof now feeling herself despoiled, she felt a continual combat, and durst not attempt that which she desired most, but eschewed the thing whereof her mind liked best.

“ Alas (said she) is it possible after the taste of the value of honest obedience which the wife oweth unto her husband, that I should desire to suffer the heat which burneth and altereth the martyred minds of those that subdue themselves to love? Can such attempt pierce the heart of me to become amorous by forgetting and straying from the limits of honest life? But what desire is this? I have a certain unacquainted lust, and yet very well know not what it is that moveth me, and to whom I shall vow the

spoil thereof. I am truly more fond and foolish than ever Narcissus was, for there is neither shadow nor voice, upon which I can well stay my sight, nor yet simple imagination of any worldly man, whereupon I can arrest the conceit of my unstayed heart and the desires which provoke my mind. Pygmalion loved once a marble pillar, and I have but one desire, the colour whereof is more pale than death. There is nothing which can give the same so much as one spot of vermillion red. If I do discover these appetites to any wight, perhaps they will mock me for my labour, and for all the beauty and noble birth that is in me, they will make no conscience to deem me for their jesting stock, and to solace themselves with rehearsal of my fond conceits. But sith there is no enemy in the field, and that but simple suspicion doth assail me, why break I not the same, and deface the entire remembrance of the lightness of my brain ? It appertaineth unto me to show myself, as issued from the noble house of Aragon : to me it doth belong to take heed how I err or degenerate from the royal blood whereof I came." In this sort that fair widow and young princess fantasied in the night upon the discourse of her appetites. But when the day was come, seeing the great multitude of the Neapolitan lords and gentlemen that marched up and down the city, eyeing and beholding their best beloved, or using talk of love with them whose servants they were, all that which she thought upon in the night, vanished so soon as the flame of burned straw, or the powder of cannon shot, and purposed for any respect to live no longer in that sort, but promised the conquest of some friend that was lusty and discreet. But the

difficulty rested in that she knew not upon whom to fix her love, fearing to be slandered, and also that the light disposition and manner of most part of youth were to be suspected, in such wise as giving over all them which vaulted upon their jennets, Turkey palfreys, and other coursers along the city of Naples, she purposed to take repast of other venison, than of that fond and wanton troop. So her mishap began already to spin the thread which choked the air and breath of her unhappy life. Ye have heard before that Master Bologna was one of the wisest and most perfect gentlemen that the land of Naples that time brought forth, and for his beauty, proportion, gallantries, valiance, and good grace, without comparison. His favour was so sweet and pleasant, as they which kept him company, had somewhat to do to abstain their affection. Who then could blame this fair princess, if (pressed with desire of match, to remove the ticklish instigations of her wanton flesh, and having in her presence a man so wise) she did set her mind on him, or fantasy to marry him? Would not that party for calming of his thirst and hunger, being set at a table before sundry sorts of delicate viands, ease his hunger? Methinks the person doth greatly forget himself, which having handfast upon occasion, suffereth the same to vanish and fly away, sith it is well known that she being bald behind, hath no place to seize upon when desire moveth us to lay hold upon her. Which was the cause that the Duchess became extremely in love with the master of her house. In such wise as before all men, she spared not to praise the great perfections of him whom she desired to be altogether hers.

And so she was enamoured, that it was as possible to see the night to be void of darkness, as the Duchess without the presence of her Bologna, or else by talk of words to set forth his praise, the continual remembrance of whom (for that she loved him as herself) was her only mind's repast. The gentleman that was full wise, and had at other times felt the great force of the passion which proceedeth from extreme love, immediately did mark the countenance of the Duchess, and perceived the same so near, as unfeignedly he knew that very ardently the lady was in love with him : and albeit he saw the inequality and difference between them both, she being sorted out of the royal blood, and himself of meaner calling, yet knowing love to have no respect to state or dignity, determined to follow his fortune, and to serve her which so lovingly showed herself to him. Then suddenly reproving his fond conceit, he said unto himself : " What folly is that I enterprise, to the prejudice and peril of mine honour and life ? Ought the wisdom of a gentleman to stray and wander through the assaults of an appetite rising of sensuality, and that reason give place to that which doth participate with brute beasts deprived of all reason by subduing the mind to the affections of the body ? No, no, a virtuous man ought to let shine in himself the force of the generosity of his mind. This is not to live according to the spirit, when pleasure shall make us forget our duty and safeguard of our conscience. The reputation of a wise gentleman resteth not only to be valiant, and skilful in feats of arms, or in service of the noble : but needful it is for him by discretion to make himself praiseworthy, and by

vanquishing of himself to open the gate to fame, whereby he may everlastinglly make himself glorious to all posterity. Love pricketh and provoketh the spirit to do well, I do confess, but that affection ought to be addressed to some virtuous end, tending to marriage, for otherwise that unspotted image shall be soiled with the villainy of beastly pleasure. Alas," said he, " how easy it is to dispute, when the thing is absent, which can both force and violently assail the bulwarks of most constant hearts. I full well do see the truth, and do feel the thing that is good, and know what behoveth me to follow: but when I view the peerless beauty of my lady, her graces, wisdom, behaviour and courtesy, when I see her to cast so loving an eye upon me, that she useth so great familiarity, that she forgetteth the greatness of her house to abase herself for my respect: how is it possible that I should be so foolish to despise a duty so rare and precious, and to set light by that which the noblest would pursue with all reverence and devoir? Shall I be so void of wisdom to suffer the young princess to see herself contemned of me, thereby to convert her love to tears, by setting her mind upon another, that shall seek mine overthrow? Who knoweth not the fury of a woman: specially the noble dame, by seeing her self despised? No, no, she loveth me and I will be her servant, and use the fortune proffered. Shall I be the first simple gentleman that hath married or loved a princess? Is it not more honourable for me to settle my mind upon a place so high, than upon some simple wench by whom I shall neither attain profit, or advancement? Baldwin of Flanders, did not he a noble

enterprise when he carried away Judith the daughter of the French King, as she was passing upon the seas into England, to be married to the king of that country? I am neither pirate nor adventurer, for the lady loveth me. What wrong do I then to any person by rendering love again? Is not she at liberty? To whom ought she to make account of her deeds and doings, but to God alone and to her own conscience? I will love her, and carry like affection for the love which I know and see that she beareth unto me, being assured that the same is directed to good end, and that a woman so wise as she is, will not hazard the blemish of her honour."

Thus Bologna framed the plot for entertainment of the Duchess (albeit her love already was fully bent upon him) and fortified himself against all perilous mishap and chance that might succeed, as ordinarily you see that lovers conceive all things for their advantage, and fantasy dreams agreeable to their most desire, resembling the mad and Bedlam persons which have before their eyes, the figured fancies which cause the conceit of their fury, and stay themselves upon the vision of that which most troubleth their offended brain. On the other side, the Duchess was in no less care of her lover, the will of whom was hid and secret, which more did vex and torment her, than the fire of love that burned her fervently. She could not tell what way to hold, to do him understand her heart and affection. She feared to discover the same unto him, doubting either that some fond and rigorous answer, or the revealing of her mind to him, whose presence pleased her more than all of the men of the world. "Alas,"

said she, “ am I happed into so strange misery, that with mine own mouth I must make request to him, which with all humility ought to offer me his service ? Shall a lady of such blood as I am, be constrained to sue, where all other be required by importunate instance of their suitors ? Ah love, love, whatsoever he was that clothed thee with such puissance, I dare say he was the cruel enemy of man’s freedom. It is impossible that thou hadst thy being in heaven, sith the clemency and courteous influence of the same, investeth man with better benefits, than to suffer her nurse children to be entreated with such rigour. He lieth which saith that Venus is thy mother, for the sweetness and good grace that resteth in that pitiful goddess, who taketh no pleasure to see lovers pierced with so eager travails as that which afflicteth my heart. It was some fierce cogitation of Saturn, that brought thee forth, and sent thee into the world to break the ease of them which live at rest without any passion or grief. Pardon me, Love, if I blasphemeth thy majesty, for the stress and endless grief wherein I am plunged, maketh me thus to rove at large, and the doubts, which I conceive, do take away the health and soundness of my mind, the little experience in thy school causeth this amaze in me, to be solicited with desire that countersayeth the duty, honour and reputation of my state : the party whom I love, is a gentleman, virtuous, valiant, sage, and of good grace. In this there is no cause to blame love of blindness, for all the inequality of our houses, apparent upon the first sight and show of the same. But from whence issue monarchs, princes, and great lords, but from the natural and common

mass of earth, whereof other men do come ? what maketh these differences between those that love each other, if not the sottish opinion which we conceive of greatness and pre-eminence : as though natural affections be like to that ordained by the fantasy of men in their laws extreme. And what greater right have princes to join with a simple gentlewoman, than the princess to marry a gentleman, and such as Antonio Bologna is, in whom heaven and nature have forgotten nothing to make him equal with them which march amongst the greatest. I think we be the daily slaves of the fond and cruel fantasy of those tyrants, which say they have puissance over us : and that straining our will to their tyranny, we be still bound to the chain like the galley slave. No, no, Bologna shall be my husband, for of a friend I purpose to make my loyal and lawful husband, meaning thereby not to offend God and men together, and pretend to live without offence of conscience, whereby my soul shall not be hindered for anything I do, by marrying him whom I so strangely love. I am sure not to be deceived in love. He loveth me so much or more as I do him, but he dareth not disclose the same, fearing to be refused and cast off with shame. Thus two united wills, and two hearts tied together with equal knot cannot choose but bring forth fruits worthy of such society. Let men say what they list, I will do none otherwise than my head and mind have already framed. Semblably I need not make account to any person for my fact, my body, and reputation being in full liberty and freedom. The bond of marriage made, shall cover the fault which men would find, and leaving mine estate, I shall do no wrong

but to the greatness of my house, which maketh me amongst men right honourable. But these honours be nothing worth, where the mind is void of contentation, and where the heart pricked forward by desire leaveth the body and mind restless without quiet." Thus the Duchess founded her enterprise, determining to marry her household master, seeking for occasion and time, meet for disclosing of the same, and albeit that a certain natural shamefastness, which of custom accompanieth ladies, did close her mouth, and made her to defer (for a certain time) the effect of her resolved mind: yet in the end vanquished with love and impatience, she was forced to break off silence, and to assure herself in him, rejecting fear conceived of shame, to make her way to pleasure, which she lusted more than marriage, the same serving her, but for a mask and coverture, to hide her follies and shameless lusts, for which she did the penance that her folly deserved. For no colourable deed or deceitful trumpery can serve the excuse of any notable wickedness. She then thoroughly persuaded in her intent, dreaming and thinking of nought else, but upon the embracement of her Bologna, ended and determined her conceits and pretended follies: and upon a time sent for him up into her chamber, as commonly she did for the affairs and matters of her house, and taking him aside unto a window, having prospect into a garden, she knew not how to begin her talk: (for the heart being seized, the mind troubled, and the wits out of course, the tongue failed to do his office,) in such wise, as of long time she was unable to speak one only word. He surprised with like affection, was more astonished

by seeing the alteration of his lady. So the two lovers stood still like images beholding one another, without any moving at all, until the lady the hardiest of them both, as feeling the most vehement and greatest grief, took Bologna by the hand, and dissembling what she thought, used this or such language : “ If any other besides yourself (Gentleman) should understand the secret which now I purpose to disclose, I doubt what speech were necessary to colour, what I shall speak : but being assured of your discretion and wisdom, and with what perfection nature hath endued you, and art, having accomplished that in you, which nature did begin to work, as one bred and brought up in the royal court of the second Alphonse, of Ferdinando, and Frederick of Aragon my cousins, I will make no doubt at all to manifest to you the hidden secrets of my heart, being well persuaded that when you shall both hear and savour my reasons, and test the light which I bring forth for me, easily you may judge that mine advice cannot be other than just and reasonable. But if your conceits shall stray from that which I determine, I shall be forced to think and say that they which esteem you wise and sage, and to be a man of good and ready wit, be marvellously deceived. Notwithstanding my heart foretelleth that it is impossible for Master Bologna, to wander so far from equity, but that by and by he will enter the lists and discern the white from black, and the wrong from that which is just and right : for so much as hitherto I never saw thing done by you, which preposterated or perverted the good judgment that all the world esteemeth to shine in you, the same well manifested and declared by your tongue, the right

judge of the mind, you know and see how I am a widow through the death of that noble gentleman of good remembrance, the Duke my lord and husband : you be not ignorant also, that I have lived and governed myself in such wise in my widow state, as there is no man so hard and severe of judgment, that can blazon reproach of me in that which appertaineth to the honesty and reputation of such a lady as I am, bearing my port so right, as my conscience yieldeth no remorse, supposing that no man hath wherewith to bite and accuse me. Touching the order of the goods of the Duke my son, I have used them with diligence and discretion, as besides the debts, which I have discharged sithence the death of my lord : I have purchased a goodly manor in Calabria, and have annexed the same to the dukedom of his heir : and at this day do not owe one penny to any creditor that lent money to the Duke, which he took up to furnish the charges in the wars, which he sustained in the service of the King our sovereign lord, in the late wars for the Kingdom of Naples. I have as I suppose by this means stopped the slanderous mouth and given cause unto my son, during his life to account himself bound unto his mother : now having till this time lived for other, and made myself subject more than nature could bear, I am intended to change both my life and condition. I have till this time run, travelled, and removed to the Castles and Lordships of the Dukedom, to Naples and other places, being in mind to tarry as I am a widow. But what new affairs and new counsel hath possessed my mind ? I have travailed and pained myself enough : I have too long abidden a widow's life : I am determined

therefore to provide a husband, who by loving me, shall honour and cherish me according to the love which I shall bear him, and my desert. For to love a man without marriage, God defend my heart should ever think, and shall rather die a hundred thousand deaths, than a desire so wicked should soil my conscience, knowing well that a woman which setteth her honour to sale, is less than nothing, and deserveth not the common air should breathe upon her, for all the reverence that men do bear unto them. I accuse no person, albeit that many noble women have their foreheads marked, with the blame of dishonest life, and being honoured of some, be nevertheless the common fable of the world. To the intent then that such mishap happen not to me, and perceiving myself unable still thus to live, being young as I am, and (God be thanked) neither deformed nor yet painted, I had rather be the loving wife of a simple fere, than the concubine of a king or great prince. And what? is the mighty monarch able to wash away the fault of his wife which hath abandoned him contrary to the duty and honesty which the undefiled bed requireth? no less than princesses that whilom trespassed with those which were of baser stuff than themselves. Messalina with her imperial robe could not so well cover her faults, but that the historians, do defame her with the name and title of a common woman. Faustina the wife of the sage monarch Marcus Aurelius, gained like report by rendering herself to others' pleasure, besides her lawful spouse. To marry myself to one that is mine equal, it is impossible, for so much as there is no lord in all this country meet for my degree, but is too old of age,

the rest being dead in these later wars. To marry a husband that yet is but a child, is folly extreme, for the inconveniences which daily chance thereby, and the evil entreaty that ladies do receive when they come to age, when their nature waxeth cold, by reason whereof, embracements be not so favourable, and their husbands glutted with ordinary meat, use to run in exchange: wherefore I am resolved without respite or delay, to choose some well qualified and renowned gentleman, that hath more virtue than riches, that is of better fame and bruit, than of wealth and revenue, to the intent I may make him my lord, espouse, and husband. For I cannot employ my love upon treasure, which may be taken away from him, in whom riches of the mind doth fail, and shall be better content to see an honest gentleman with little living, to be praised and commended of each degree for his good deeds, than a rich carl cursed and detested of all the world. Thus much I say, and it is the sum of all my secrets, wherein I pray your counsel and advice. I know that some will be offended with my choice, and the lords my brothers, specially the Cardinal will think it strange, and receive the same with ill digesture, that much ado shall I have to be agreed with them and to remove the grief they shall conceive against me for this mine attempt: wherefore I would the same should secretly be kept, until without peril and danger either of myself or him, whom I pretend to marry, I may publish and manifest, not my love but the marriage which I hope in God shall soon be consummate and accomplished with one, whom I do love better than myself, and who as I full well do

know, doth love me better than his own proper life." Master Bologna, which till then hearkened to the oration of the Duchess without moving, feeling himself touched so near, and hearing that his lady had made her approach for marriage, stood still astonished, his tongue not able to frame one word, only fantasied a thousand chimeras in the air, and formed like number of imaginations in his mind, not able to conjecture what he was, to whom the Duchess had vowed her love, and the possession of her beauty. He could not think that this joy was prepared for himself, for that his lady spake no word of him, and he less durst open his mouth, and yet was well assured that she loved him beyond measure. Notwithstanding knowing the fickleness and unstable heart of women, he said unto himself that she would change her mind, for seeing him to be so great a coward, as not to offer his service to a lady by whom he saw himself so many times both wantonly looked upon, and entertained with some secrecy more than familiar. The Duchess which was a fine and subtle dame, seeing her friend rapt with the passion, and standing still unmovable through fear, pale and amazed, as if he had been accused and condemned to die, knew by that countenance and astonishment of Bologna, that she was perfectly beloved of him : and so meaning not to suffer him any longer to continue in that amaze, ne yet to further fear him, with dissembled and feigned marriage of any other but with him, she took him by the hand, and beholding him with a wanton and luring eye, (in such sort as the curious philosophers themselves would awake, if such a lamp and torch did burn within their studies,)

she said thus unto him : “ Signor Antonio, I pray you be of good cheer, and torment not yourself for anything that I have said : I know well, and of long time have perceived what good and faithful love you bear me, and with what affection you have served me, sithence you first came into my company. Think me not to be so ignorant, but that I know full well by outward signs, what secret thoughts be hid in the inner heart : and that conjectures many times do give me true and certain knowledge of concealed things : and am not so foolish to think you to be so undiscreet but that you have marked my countenance and manner, and thereby have known that I have been more affectioned to you, than to any other : for that cause (said she, straining him by the hand very lovingly, and with cheerful colour in her face) I swear unto you, and do promise that if you think meet, it shall be none other but yourself whom I will have, and desire to take to husband and lawful spouse, being assured so much of you, as the love which so long time hath been hidden and covered in our hearts, shall appear by so evident proof, as only death shall end and undo the same.” The gentleman hearing such sudden talk, and the assurance of that which he most wished for, albeit he saw the danger extreme whereunto he launched himself by espousing this great lady, and the enemies he should get by entering such alliance : notwithstanding, building upon vain hope, and thinking at length that the choler of the Aragon brothers would pass away if they understood the marriage, determined to pursue the purpose, and not to refuse that great preferment, being so prodigally offered : for which cause he

answered his lady in this manner : “ If it were in my power Madam, to bring to pass that, which I desire for your service by acknowledging the benefits and favours which you depart unto me, as my mind presenteth thanks for the same, I would think myself the happiest gentleman that liveth, and you the best served princess of the world. For one better beloved (I dare presume to say, and so long as I live will affirm) is not to be found. If till this time I delayed to open that which now I discover unto you, I beseech you Madam to impute it to the greatness of your estate, and to the duty of my calling and office in your house, being not seemly for a servant to talk of such secrets with his lady and mistress. And truly the pain which I have endured to hold my peace, and to hide my grief, hath been more noisome to me than one hundred thousand like sorrows together, although it had been lawful to have revealed them to some trusty friend : I do not deny Madam, but of long time you did perceive my folly and presumption, by addressing my mind so high, as to the Aragon blood, and to such a princess as you be. And who can beguile the eye of a lover, specially of her, whose paragon for good mind, wisdom and gentleness is not ? And I confess to you besides, that I have most evidently perceived how a certain love hath lodged in your gracious heart, wherewith you bare me greater affection, than you did to any other within the compass of your family. But what ? great ladies’ hearts be fraught with secrets and conceits of other effects than the minds of simple women, which caused me to hope for none other guerdon of my loyal and faithful affection, than death, and the same very

short, and sith that little hope accompanied with great, nay, rather extreme passion, is not able to give sufficient force, both to suffer and to stablish my heart with constancy. Now for so much as of your motion, grace, courtesy and liberality the same is offered, and that it pleaseth you to accept me for yours, I humbly beseech you to dispose of me not as husband, but of one which is, and shall be your servant for ever, and such as is more ready to obey, than you to command. It resteth now Madam, to consider how, and in what wise our affairs are to be directed, that things being in assurance, you may so live without peril and bruit of slanderous tongues, as your good fame and honest report may continue without spot or blemish." Behold the first act of this tragedy, and the provision of the fare which afterwards sent them both to their grave, who immediately gave their mutual faith: and the hour was assigned the next day, that the fair princess should be in her chamber alone, attended upon with one only gentlewoman which had been brought up with her from the cradle, and was made privy to the heavy marriage of those two lovers which was consummate in her presence. And for the present time they passed the same in words: for ratification whereof they went to bed together: but the pain in the end was greater than the pleasure, and had been better for them both, yea and also for the third, that they had showed themselves so wise in the deed, as discreet in keeping silence of that which was done: for albeit their marriage was secret, and thereby politicly governed themselves in their stealths and robberies of love, and that Bologna more oft held the

state of the steward of the house by day, than of lord of the same, and by night supplied that place, yet in the end, the thing was perceived which they desired to be closely kept. And as it is impossible to till and culture a fertile ground, but that the same must yield some fruit, even so the Duchess after many pleasures (being ripe and plentiful) became with child, which at the first astonished the married couple: nevertheless the same so well was provided for, as the first childbed was kept secret, and none did know thereof: the child was nursed in the town, and the father desired to have him named Frederick, for remembrance of the parents of his wife. Now fortune which lieth in daily wait and ambushment, and liketh not that men should long loiter in pleasure, and pastime, being envious of such prosperity, cramped so the legs of our two lovers, as they must needs change their game, and learn some other practice: for so much as the Duchess being great with child again, and delivered of a girl, the business of the same was not so secretly done, but that it was discovered. And it sufficed not that the bruit was noised through Naples, but that the sound flew further off: as each man doth know that Rumour hath many mouths, who with the multitude of his tongues and trumps, proclaimeth in divers and sundry places, the things which chance in all the regions of the earth; even so that babbling fool, carried the news of that second childbed to the ears of the Cardinal of Aragon the Duchess's brother, being then at Rome. Think what joy, and pleasure the Aragon brothers had, by hearing the report of their sister's fact: I dare presume to say, that albeit they were extremely wroth

with this happened slander, and with that dishonest fame which the Duchess had gotten throughout Italy, yet far greater was their sorrow and grief for that they did not know what he was, that so courteously was allied to their house, and in their love had increased their lineage: and therefore swelling with despite, and rapt with fury to see themselves so defamed by one of their blood, they purposed by all means whatsoever it cost them, to know the lucky lover that had so well tilled the Duchess their sister's field. Thus desirous to remove that shame from before their eyes, and to be revenged of a wrong so notable, they sent espials round about, and scouts to Naples, to view and spy the behaviour and talk of the Duchess, to settle some certain judgment of him, which stealingly was become their brother-in-law. The Duchess's court being in this trouble, she did continually perceive in her house, her brothers' men to mark her countenance, and to note those that came thither to visit her, and to whom she used greatest familiarity, because it is impossible but that the fire, although it be raked under the ashes, must give some heat: and albeit the two lovers used each other's company, without showing any sign of their affection, yet they purposed to change their estate for a time, by yielding truce to their pleasures: yea, and although Bologna was a wise and provident personage, fearing to be surprised upon the fact, or that the gentlewoman of the chamber corrupted with money, or forced by fear, should pronounce any matter to his hindrance or disadvantage, determined to absent himself from Naples, yet not so suddenly but that he made the Duchess his faithful lady and

companion privy of his intent: and as they were secretly in their chamber together, he used these or such like words: “ Madam, albeit the right good intent and unstained conscience, is free from fault, yet the judgment of men hath further relation to the exterior appearance than to virtue’s force and innocency itself, as ignorant of the secrets of the thought: and so in things that be well done, we must of necessity fall into the sentence of those, whom beastly affection ravisheth more, than ruled reason. You see the solemn watch and guard which the servants of the lords your brothers do within your house, and the suspicion which they have conceived by reason of your second childbed, and by what means they labour truly to know how your affairs proceed, and things do pass. I fear not death where your service may be advanced, but if herein the maiden of your chamber be not secret, if she be corrupted, and if she keep not close that which she ought to do, it is not ignorant to you that it is the loss of my life, and shall die suspected to be a whoremonger and varlet, even I, (I say) shall incur that peril, which am your true and lawful husband. This separation chanceth not by justice or desert, sith the cause is too righteous for us: but rather your brethren will procure my death, when I shall think the same in greatest assurance. If I had to do but with one or two, I would not change the place, ne march one step from Naples, but be assured, that a great band, and the same well armed will set upon me: I pray you, Madam, suffer me to retire for a time, for I am assured that when I am absent, they will never soil their hands or imbrue their swords in your blood. If I doubted

anything at all of peril touching your own person, I had rather a hundred hundred times die in your company, than live to see you no more : but out of doubt I am, that if our affairs were discovered, and they knew you to be begotten with child by me, your safety would be provided for where I should sustain the penance of the fact, committed without fault or sin : and therefore I am determined to go from Naples, to order mine affairs, and to cause my revenue to be brought to the place of mine abode, and from thence to Ancona, until it pleaseth God to mitigate the rage of your brethren, and recover their good wills for consent to our marriage. But I mean not to do or conclude anything without your advice, and if this intent do not like you, give me counsel Madam, what I were best to do, that both in life and death you may know your faithful servant and loving husband is ready to obey and please you.” This good lady hearing her husband’s discourse, uncertain what to do, wept bitterly, as well for grief to lose his presence, as for that she felt herself with child the third time : the sighs and tears, the sobs and heavy looks, which she threw forth upon her sorrowful husband, gave sufficient witness of her pain and grief : and if none had heard her, I think her plaints would have well expressed her inward smart of mind. But like a wise lady seeing the alleged reasons of her husband, licensed him although against her mind, not without utterance of these few words, before he went out of her chamber : “ Dear husband, if I were so well assured of the affection of my brethren, as I am of my maid’s fidelity, I would entreat you not to leave me alone : specially in the case I am, being

with child : but knowing that to be just and true which you have said, I am content to force my will for a certain time, that hereafter we may live at rest together, joining ourselves in the company of our children and family, void of those troubles, which great courts ordinarily bear within the compass of their palaces. Of one thing I must entreat you, that so often as you can by trusty messenger, you send me word and intelligence of your health and state, because the same shall bring unto me greater pleasure and contentation, than the welfare of mine own : and because also, upon such occurrences as shall chance, I may provide for mine own affairs, the surety of myself, and of our children." In saying so, she embraced him very amorously, and he kissed her with so great sorrow and grief of heart, as the soul was ready out of his body to take her flight, sorrowful beyond measure so to leave her whom he loved, for the great courtesies and honour which he had received at her hands. In the end, fearing that the Aragon espials would come and descry them in those privities, Bologna took his leave and bade his lady and spouse farewell. And this was the second act of this tragical history to see a fugitive husband secretly to marry, especially her, upon whom he ought not so much as to look but with fear and reverence. Behold here (O ye foolish lovers) a glass of your lightness, and ye women, the course of your fond behaviour. It behoveth not the wise suddenly to execute their first motions and desires of their heart for so much as they may be assured that pleasure is pursued so near with a repentance so sharp to be suffered, and hard to be digested, as their

voluptuousness shall utterly discontent them. True it is, that marriages be done in heaven and performed in earth, but that saying may not be applied to fools, which govern themselves by carnal desires, whose scope is but pleasure, and the reward many times equal to their folly. Shall I be of opinion that a household servant ought to solicit, nay rather suborn the daughter of his lord without punishment, or that a vile and abject person dare to mount upon a princess's bed ? No, no, policy requireth order in all, and each wight ought to be matched according to their quality, without making a pastime of it to cover their follies, and know not of what force love and destiny be, except the same be resisted. A goodly thing it is to love, but where reason loseth place, love is without his effect, and the sequel rage and madness : leave we to discourse of those which believe that they be constrained to follow the force of their mind, and may easily subdue themselves to the laws of virtue and honesty, like one that thrusteth his head into a sack, and thinks he cannot get out : such people do please themselves in their loss, and think all well that is noisome to their health, daily following their own delights. Come we again then to Sir Bologna, who after he had left his wife in her castle, went to Naples, and having sessed a rent upon her lands, and levied a good sum of money, he repaired to Ancona a city of the patrimony of the Roman Church, whither he carried the two children, which he had of the Duchess, causing them to be brought up with such diligence and care, as it is to be thought a father well affectioned to his wife would do, and who delighted to see a branch of the tree,

that to him was the best beloved fruit of the world. There he hired a house for his train, and for those that waited upon his wife, who in the meantime was in great care, and could not tell of what wood to make her arrows, perceiving that her belly began to swell, and grow to the time of her delivery, seeing that from day to day, her brothers' servants were at her back, void of counsel and advice, if one evening she had not spoken to the gentlewoman of her chamber, touching the doubts and peril wherein she was, not knowing how she might be delivered from the same. That maiden was gentle and of a good mind and stomach, and loved her mistress very dearly, and seeing her so amazed and tormenting herself to death, minding to fray her no further, ne to reprove her of her fault which could not be amended, but rather to provide for the danger whereunto she had headlong cast herself, gave her this advice : "How now, Madam," (said she,) "is that wisdom which from your childhood hath been so familiar in you, dislodged from your breast in time when it ought chiefly to rest for encountering of those mishaps that are coming upon us ? Think you to avoid the dangers, by thus tormenting yourself, except you set your hands to the work thereby to give the repulse to adverse fortune ? I have heard you many times speak of the constancy and force of mind, which ought to shine in the deeds of princesses, more clearly than amongst those dames of baser house, and which ought to make them appear like the sun and the little stars : and yet I see you now astonished, as though you had never foreseen, that adversity chanceth so well to catch the great within his clutches,

as the base and simple sort. It is but now that you have called to remembrance that which might ensue your marriage with Sir Bologna? Did his only presence assure you against the waits of fortune, and was it the thought of pains, fears and frights, which now turmoileth your dolorous mind? Ought you thus to vex yourself, when need it is to think how to save both your honour, and the fruit within your entrails? If your sorrow be so great over Sir Bologna, and if you fear your childbed will be descried, why seek you not means to attempt some voyage, for covering of the fact, to beguile the eyes of them which so diligently do watch you? Doth your heart fail you in that matter? whereof do you dream? why sweat and fret you before you make me answer?" "Ah sweetheart," (answered the Duchess,) "if thou feltest the pain which I do suffer, thy tongue would not be so much at will, as thou shovest it now to be for reproof of my small constancy. I do sorrow specially for the causes which thou allegest, and above all, for that I know well, that if my brethren had never so little intelligence of my being with child, I were undone and my life at an end, and peradventure poor wench, thou shouldest bear the penance for my sin. But what way can I take, that still these candles may not give light, and I voided of the train which ought to wait upon my brethren? I think if I should descend into hell, they would know whether any shadow there were in love with me. Now guess if I should travel the realm, or retire to any other place, whether they would let me live in peace? Nothing less, for suspect they would, that the cause of my departure proceeded of desire

to live at liberty, to dally with him, whom they judge to be other than my lawful husband : and it may so be, that as they be wicked and suspicious, so will they doubt of my being with child and thereby shall I be far more unfortunate by travelling, than here in misery amid mine anguish and you the rest that be keepers of my counsel, fall into greater danger, upon whom no doubt they will be revenged : and flesh themselves for your unhappy waiting and attendance upon us.” “ Madam,” said the bold maiden, “ be not afraid, and follow mine advice, for I hope that it shall be the means both to see your spouse, and to rid those troublesome varlets out of your house, and in like manner safely to deliver you into good assurance.” “ Say your mind,” quod the lady, “ for it may be, that I will govern myself according to the same.” “ Mine advice is then,” said the gentlewoman, “ to let your household understand, that you made a vow to visit the Holy Temple of Our Lady of Loretto, (a famous pilgrimage in Italy) and that you command your train to make themselves ready to wait upon you for accomplishment of your devotion, and from thence you shall take your journey to sojourn at Ancona, whither before you go hence, you shall send your movables and plate, with such money as you think necessary for furnishing of your charges : and afterwards God will perform the rest, and through His holy mercy will guide and direct all your affairs.” The Duchess hearing the maiden speak her good advice and amazed of her sudden invention, could not forbear to embrace and kiss her, blessing the hour wherein she was born, and that ever she chanced into her company, to

whom afterwards she said : “ My wench, I had well determined to give over mine estate and noble port, joyfully to live a simple gentlewoman with my dear and well beloved husband, but I could not devise how I should conveniently depart this country without suspicion of some folly : and sith that thou hast so well instructed me for bringing that same to pass, I promise thee that so diligently thy counsel shall be performed, as I see the same to be right good and necessary : for rather had I see my husband, being alone without title of Duchess or great lady, than to live without him beautified with the graces and names of honour and pre-eminence.” This devised plot was no sooner grounded, but she gave order for execution of the same, and brought it to pass with such dexterity as the lady in less than eight days had conveyed and sent the most part of her movables, and specially the chiefest and best to Ancona, taking in the meantime her way towards Loretto after she had bruited her solemn vow made for that pilgrimage. It was not sufficient for this foolish woman to take a husband more to glut her libidinous appetite, than for other occasion, except she added to her sin another execrable impiety, making holy places and duties of devotion, to be as it were the shadows of her folly. But let us consider the force of lovers’ rage, which so soon as it hath seized upon the minds of men, we see how marvellous be the effects thereof, and with what straint and puissance that madness subdueth the wise and strongest worldlings : who would think that a great lady besides the abandoning her estate, her goods and child, would have misprized her honour and reputation, to follow like a vagabond, a

poor and simple gentleman, and him besides that was the household servant of her court? and yet you see this great and mighty Duchess trot and run after the male, like a female wolf or lioness (when they go to sault,) and forget the noble blood of Aragon whereof she was descended, to couple herself almost with the simplest person of all the trimmest gentlemen of Naples. But turn we not the example of follies to be a matter of consequence: for if one or two become bankrupt of their honour, it followeth not, good ladies, that their fact should serve for a match to your deserts, and much less a patron for you to follow. These histories be not written to train and trap you to pursue the thousand thousand slippery sleights of love's gallantise, but rather carefully to warn you to behold the semblable faults, and to serve for a drug to discharge the poison which gnaweth and fretteth the integrity and soundness of the soul. The wise and skilful apothecary or compositor of drugs, dresseth vipers' flesh to purge the patient from hot corrupted blood which conceiveth and engendereth leprosy within his body. In like manner the fond love and wicked ribaldry of Semiramis, Pasiphae, Messalina, Faustina, and Romilda is showed in writ, that every of you may fear to be numbered and recorded amongst such common and dishonourable women. You princes and great lords read the follies of Paris, the adulteries of Hercules, the dainty and effeminate life of Sardanapalus, the tyranny of Phalaris, Busiris, or Dionysius of Sicily, and see the history of Tiberius, Nero, Caligula, Domitian and Heliogabalus, and spare not to recount them amongst our wanton youths which soil themselves villains

more filthily than the swine do in the dirt: all this intendeth it an instruction for your youth to follow the infection and whoredom of those monsters? Better it were all those books were drenched in bottomless depth of seas, than Christian life by their means should be corrupted: but the example of the wicked is induced for to eschew and avoid them, as the life of the good and honest is remembered to frame and address out behaviour in this world to be praiseworthy and commended: otherwise the holiness of sacred writ should serve for an argument to the unthrifty and luxurious to confirm and approve their beastly and licentious wickedness. Come we again then to our purpose: the good pilgrim of Loretto went forth her voyage to achieve her devotions, by visiting the saint for whose relics she was departed the country of the Duke her son: when she had done her suffrages at Loretto, her people thought her voyage to be at an end, and that she would have returned again into her country: but she said unto them, that for so much as she was so near Ancona, being but fifteen miles off, she would not retire but she had seen that ancient and goodly city, which divers histories do greatly recommend, as well for the antiquity, as for the pleasant seat thereof. All were of her advice, and went forward to see the antiquities of Ancona, and she to renew the pleasures which she had before begun with her Bologna, who was advertised of all her determination, resting now like a god, possessed with the jewels and riches of the Duchess, and had taken a fair palace in the great street of the city, by the gate whereof the train of his lady must pass. The harbinger of the Duchess

posted before to take up lodging for the train, but Bologna offered unto him his palace for the lady. So Bologna which was already well beloved in Ancona, and newly entered amity and great acquaintance with the gentlemen of the city, with a goodly troop of them, went forth to meet his wife, to whom he presented his house, and besought her that she and her train would vouchsafe to lodge there. She received the same very thankfully, and withdrew herself unto his house, who conducted her thither, not as a husband, but like him that was her humble and affectionate servant. But what needeth great discourse of words? The Duchess knowing that it was impossible but each man must be privy to her fact, and know what secrets hath passed between her and her husband, to the end that no other opinion of her childbed should be conceived, but that which was good and honest, and done since the accomplishment of the marriage, the morrow after her arrival to Ancona, assembled all her train in the hall, of purpose no longer to keep close that Sir Bologna was her husband, and that already she had had two children by him, and again was great with child, with a third. And when they were come together after dinner, in that presence of her husband, she used unto them these words: "Gentlemen, and all ye my trusty and loving servants, high time it is to manifest to every of you, the thing which hath been done before the face, and in the presence of Him who knoweth the most obscure and hidden secrets of our thoughts. And needful it is not to keep silent that which is neither evil done ne hurtful to any person: if things might be kept secret and still remain

unknown, except they were declared by the doers of them, yet would not I commit the wrong in concealing that, which to discover unto you doth greatly delight me, and delivereth my mind from exceeding grief, in such wise as if the flames of my desire could break out with such violence, as the fire hath taken heat within my mind, ye should see the smoke mount up with greater smoulder than that which the mount Gibel doth vomit forth at certain seasons of the year. And to the intent I may not keep you long in this suspect, this secret fire within my heart, and that which I shall cause to flame in open air is a certain opinion which I conceive for a marriage by me made certain years passed, at what time I chose and wedded a husband to my fantasy and liking, desirous no longer to live in widow state, being unwilling to do the thing that should prejudice and hurt my conscience. The same is done, and yet in one thing I have offended, which is by long keeping secret the performed marriage: for the wicked bruit dispersed through the realm by reason of my childbed, one year passed, hath displeased some: howbeit my conscience receiveth comfort, for that the same is free from fault or blot. Now shall ye know therefore what he is, whom I acknowledge for my lord and spouse, and who it is that lawfully hath me espoused in the presence of this gentlewoman here present, which is the witness of our nuptials and accord of marriage. This gentleman also Antonio Bologna, is he to whom I have sworn and given my faith, and he again to me hath engaged his. He it is whom I account for my spouse and husband, (and with whom henceforth) I mean to rest and continue. In consideration

whereof, if there be any here amongst you all, that shall mislike of my choice, and is willing to wait upon my son the Duke, I mean not to let them of their intent, praying them faithfully to serve him, and to be careful of his person, and to be unto him so honest and loyal, as they have been to me so long as I was their mistress. But if any of you desire still to make your abode with me, to be partakers of my wealth and woe, I will so entertain them as they shall have good cause to be contented, if not let them depart hence to Malfi, and the steward shall provide for them according to their degree: for touching myself I do mind no more to be termed an infamous Duchess: rather would I be honoured with the title of a simple gentlewoman, or with that estate which she can have that hath an honest husband, and with whom she holdeth faithful and loyal company, than reverenced with the glory of a princess, subject to the despite of slanderous tongues." "Ye know" (said she to Bologna) "what hath passed between us, and God is the witness of the integrity of my conscience, wherefore I pray you bring forth our children, that each man may behold the fruits raised of our alliance." Having spoken those words, and the children brought forth into the hall, all the company stood still so astonished with that new success and tale, as though horns suddenly had started forth their heads, and rested immovable and amazed, like the great marble pillar of Rome called Pasquil, for so much as they never thought, ne conjectured that Bologna was the successor of the Duke of Malfi in his marriage bed. This was the preparative of the catastrophe and bloody end of this tragedy. For of all the Duchess's

servants, there was not one that was willing to continue with their ancient mistress, who with the faithful maiden of her chamber remained at Ancona, enjoying the joyful embracements of her husband, in all such pleasure and delights as they do, which having lived in fear, be set at liberty, and out of all suspicion, plunged in a sea of joy, and floating in the quiet calm of all pastime, where Bologna had none other care, but how to please his best beloved, and she studied nothing else but how to love and obey him, as the wife ought to do her husband. But this fair weather lasted not long, for as the joys of men do not long endure but waste in little time, so be the delights of lovers less firm and steadfast and pass away almost in one moment of an hour. Now the servants of the Duchess which were retired, and durst tarry no longer with her, fearing the fury of the Cardinal of Aragon brother to the lady, the very day they departed from Ancona, devised amongst themselves that one of them should ride in post to Rome, to advertise the Cardinal of the lady's marriage, to the intent that the Aragon brethren might conceive no cause to seek revenge of their disloyalty. That determination speedily was accomplished, one posting towards Rome, and the rest galloping to the country castles of the Duke. These news reported to the Cardinal and his brother, it may be conjectured how grievously they took the same, and that they were not able to digest them with modesty, the youngest of the brethren, yelped forth a thousand curses and despites, against the simple sex of womankind. "Ha," said the Prince (transported with choler, and driven into deadly fury),

“ what law is able to punish or restrain the foolish indiscretion of a woman, that yieldeth herself to her own desires ? What shame is able to bridle and withdraw a woman from her mind and madness ? Or with what fear is it possible to snaffle them from execution of their filthiness ? There is no beast be he never so wild, but man sometime may tame, and bring to his lure and order. The force and diligence of man is able to make mild the strong and proud, and to overtake the swiftest beast and fowl, or otherwise to attain the highest and deepest things of the world : but this incarnate devilish beast the woman, no force can subdue her, no swiftness can approach her mobility, no good mind is able to prevent her sleights and deceits, they seem to be procreated and born against all order of nature, and to live without law, which governeth all other things endued with some reason and understanding. But how great abomination is this, that a gentlewoman of such a house as ours is, hath forgotten her estate, and the greatness of her deceased husband, with the hope of the toward youth of the Duke her son and our nephew. Ah, false and vile bitch, I swear by the Almighty God and by His blessed wounds, that if I can catch thee, and that wicked knave thy chosen mate, I will pipe ye both such a woeful galliard, as in your embracements ye never felt like joy and mirth. I will make ye dance such a bloody bargeret, as your whorish heat for ever shall be cooled. What abuse have they committed under title of marriage, which was so secretly done, as their children do witness their lecherous love, but their promise of faith was made in open air, and serveth for a cloak and visard

of their most filthy whoredom. And what if marriage was concluded, be we of little respect, as the carrion beast could not vouchsafe to advertise us of her intent ? Or is Bologna a man worthy to be allied or mingled with the royal blood of Aragon and Castille ? No, no, be he never so good a gentleman, his race agreeth not with kingly state. But I make to God a vow, that never will I take one sound and restful sleep, until I have dispatched that infamous fact from our blood, and that the caitiff whoremonger be used according to his desert.” The Cardinal also was out of quiet, grinding his teeth together, chattering forth of his Spanish muzzle : “ Jackanapes, *Pater-Noster*,” promising no better usage to their Bologna than his younger brother did. And the better to entrap them both (without further stir for that time) they sent to the Lord Gismondo Gonsago the Cardinal of Mantua, then Legate for Pope Julius the Second at Ancona, at whose hands they enjoyed such friendship, as Bologna and all his family were commanded speedily to avoid the city. But for all that the Legate was able to do, of long time he could not prevail, Bologna had so great intelligence within Ancona. Nevertheless whiles he deferred his departure, he caused the most part of his train, his children and goods to be conveyed to Sienna, an ancient city of Tuscany which for the state and liberties, had long time been at wars with the Florentines, in such wise as the very same day that news came to Bologna that he should depart the city within fifteen days, he was ready and mounted on horseback, to take his flight to Sienna, which brake for sorrow the hearts of the Aragon brethren, seeing that they were

deceived and frustrate of their intent, because they purposed by the way to apprehend Bologna, and to cut him in pieces. But what? The time of his hard luck was not yet expired, and so the march from Ancona served not for the theatre of those two unfortunate lovers' overthrow, who certain months lived in peace in Tuscany. The Cardinal night nor day did sleep, and his brother still did wait to perform his oath of revenge. And seeing their enemy out of fear, they dispatched a post to Alfonso Castruccio, the Cardinal of Sienna, to entreat the Lord Borgliese, chief of the Seigniory there, that their sister and Bologna should be banished the country, and limits of that city, which with small suit was brought to pass. These two unfortunate, husband and wife, were chased from all places, and so unlucky as whilom Achastus was when he was accursed, or Oedipus, after his father's death, and incestuous marriage with his mother, uncertain to what saint to vow themselves, and to what place to take their flight. In the end they determined to go to Venice, but first to Romagna there to embark themselves for to retire in safety to the city environed with the Sea Adriaticum, the richest in Europe. But the poor souls made their reckoning there without their host failing half the price of their banquet. For being upon the territory of Forly, one of the train afar off, did see a troop of horsemen galloping towards their company, which by their countenance showed no sign of peace or amity at all, which made them consider that it was some ambush of their enemies. The Neapolitan gentleman seeing the onset bending upon them, began to fear death, not for that he

cared at all for his mishap, and ruin, but his heart began to cleave for heaviness to see his wife and little children ready to be murdered, and serve for the pastime of the Aragon brethren's eyes, for whose sakes he knew himself already predestinate to die, and that for despite of him, and to accelerate his death by the overthrow of his wife and children, he was assured that they would dispatch them all before his face and presence. But what is there to be done, where counsel and means to escape do fail ? Full of tears, therefore, astonishment and fear, he expected death so cruel as man could devise, and was already determined to suffer the same with good courage, for anything that the Duchess could say unto him. He might well have saved himself and his eldest son by flight, being both well mounted upon two good Turkey horses, which ran so fast, as the quarrel out of a crossbow. But he loved too much his wife and children, and would keep them company both in life and death. In the end the good lady said unto him : “ Sir, for all the joys and pleasures which you can do me, for God's sake save yourself and the little infant next you, who can well endure the galloping of the horse. For sure I am, that you being out of our company, we shall not need to fear any hurt : but if you do tarry, you will be the cause of the ruin and overthrow of us all, and we shall receive thereby no profit or advantage : take this purse therefore, and save yourself, attending better fortune in time to come.” The poor gentleman Bologna knowing that his wife had pronounced reason, and fearing that it was impossible from that time forth that she or her train could escape their hands, taking

leave of her, and kissing his children not forgetting the money which she offered unto him, willed his servants to save themselves by such means as they thought best. So giving spurs unto his horse, he began to fly amain, and his eldest son seeing his father gone, began to follow in like sort: and so for that time they two were saved by breaking of the intended ill luck like to light upon them. And where he thought to rescue himself at Venice, he turned another way, and by great journeys arrived at Milan. In the meantime the horsemen were approached near the Duchess, who seeing that Bologna had saved himself, very courteously began to speak unto the lady, were it that the Aragon brethren had given them that charge, or feared that the lady would trouble them with her importunate cries, and lamentations. One therefore amongst the troop said thus unto her: “Madam, we be commanded by the lords your brethren, to conduct you home unto your house, that you may receive again the government of the Duchy, and the order of the Duke your son, and do marvel very much at your folly, for giving yourself thus to wander the country after a man of so small reputation as Bologna is, who when he had glutted his lusty lecherous mind with the comeliness of your noble personage, will despoil you of your goods and honour, and then take his legs unto some strange country.” The simple lady, albeit grievous it was unto her to hear such speech of her husband, yet held her peace and dissembled what she thought, glad and well contented with the courtesy done unto her, fearing before that they came to kill her and thought herself already discharged, hoping upon their

courteous dealings, that she and her children from that time forth should live in good assurance. But she was greatly deceived, and knew within short space after, the good will that her brethren bare her : for so soon as these gallants had conducted her into the kingdom of Naples, to one of the castles of her son, she was committed to prison with her children, and she also that was the secretary of her unfortunate marriage. Till this time fortune was contented to proceed with indifferent quiet against those lovers, but henceforth ye shall hear the issue of their little prosperous love, and how pleasure having blinded them, never forsook them until it had given them the overthrow. It booteth not here to recite any fables or histories, contenting myself that ladies do read without too many weeping tears, the pitiful end of that miserable princess, who seeing herself a prisoner in the company of her little children and well beloved maiden, patiently lived in hope to see her brethren appeased, comforting herself for the escape of her husband out of the hands of his mortal foes. But her assurance was changed into an horrible fear and her hope to no expectation of surety, when certain days after her imprisonment, her gaoler came in, and said unto her : “ Madam I do advise you henceforth to consider and examine your conscience, for so much as I suppose that even this very day your life shall be taken from you.” I leave for you to think what horror, and trance assailed the feeble heart of this poor lady, and with what ears she received that cruel message, but her cries, and moans together with her sighs and lamentations declared with what cheer she received the advertisement. “ Alas ” (said she)

“ is it possible that my brethren should so far forget themselves, as, for a fact nothing prejudicial unto them, cruelly to put to death their innocent sister, and to imbrue the memory of their fact, in the blood of one which never did offend them ? Must I against all right and equity be put to death before the judge or magistrate have made trial of my life, and known the righteousness of my cause ? Ah God, most rightful and bountiful Father, behold the malice of my brethren, and the tyrannous cruelty of those which wrongfully do seek my blood. Is it a sin to marry ? Is it a fault to fly, and avoid the sin of whoredom ? What laws be these, where marriage bed, and joined matrimony is pursued with like severity, that murder, theft and advoutry are ? And what Christianity in a Cardinal, to shed the blood which he ought to defend ? What profession is this, to assail the innocent by the highway side, and to reave them of life in place to punish thieves and murderers ? O Lord God Thou art just, and dost all things in equity, I see well that I have trespassed against Thy Majesty in some more notorious crime than in marriage : I most humbly therefore beseech Thee to have compassion on me, and to pardon mine offences, accepting the confession, and repentance of me Thine humble servant for satisfaction of my sins, which it pleased Thee to wash away in the precious blood of Thy Son our Saviour, that being so purified, I may appear at the holy banquet in Thy glorious kingdom.” When she had thus finished her prayer, two or three of the ministers which had taken her besides Forly, came in, and said unto her : “ Now Madam make ready yourself to go to God, for behold your hour is

come." "Praised be that God" (said she) "for the wealth and woe that it pleaseth Him to send us. But I beseech you my friends to have pity upon these little babes and innocent creatures: let them not feel the smart which I am assured my brethren bear against their poor unhappy father." "Well well, madam," said they, "we will convey them to such place as they shall not want." "I also recommend unto you" (quod she) "this poor imprisoned maiden, and entreat her well, in consideration of her good service done to the unfortunate Duchess of Malfi." As she had ended those words, the two ruffians did put a cord about her neck and strangled her. The maiden seeing the piteous tragedy commenced upon her mistress, cried out amain, cursing the cruel malice of those tormentors, and besought God to be witness of the same, and crying out upon His divine Majesty, she humbly prayed unto Him to bend His Judgment against them which causeless (being no magistrates,) had killed so innocent creatures. "Reason it is" (said one of the tyrants) "that thou be partaker of thy mistress's innocence, sith thou hast been so faithful a minister, and messenger of her fleshly follies." And suddenly caught her by the hair of the head, and instead of a carcanet placed a rope about her neck. "How now" (quoth she,) "is this the promised faith you made unto my lady?" But those words flew into the air with her soul, in company of the miserable Duchess. And now hearken the most sorrowful scene of all the tragedy. The little children which had seen all this furious game executed upon their mother and her maid, as nature provoked them, or as some presage of their

mishap might lead them thereunto, kneeled upon their knees before those tyrants, and embracing their legs, wailed in such wise, as I think that any other, except a pitiless heart spoiled of all humanity, would have had compassion. And impossible it was for them, to unfold the embracements of those innocent creatures, which seemed to forejudge their death by savage looks and countenance of those roisters: whereby I think that needs it must be confessed, that nature hath in herself, and in us imprinted some sign of divination, and specially at the hour and time of death, so as the very beasts do feel some fore-warnings, although they see neither sword, nor staff, and endeavour to avoid the cruel passage of a thing so fearful, as the separation of two things so nearly united, even the body, and soul, which for the motion that chanceth at the very instant, sheweth how nature is constrained in that monstrous division, and more than horrible overthrow. But who can appease a heart determined to work mischief, and hath sworn the death of another forced thereunto by some special commandment? The Aragon brethren meant hereby nothing else, but to root out the whole name and race of Bologna. And therefore the two ministers of iniquity did like murder and slaughter upon those two tender babes, as they had done before upon their mother not without some motion of horror, for an act so detestable. Behold here how far the cruelty of man extendeth, when it coveteth nothing else but vengeance, and mark what excessive choler the mind of them produceth, which suffer themselves to be forced and overwhelmed with fury. Leave we apart the cruelty of Euchrates, the son of the King of

Bactria, and of Phraates the son of the Persian prince, of Timon of Athens, and of an infinite number of those which were rulers and governors of the Empire of Rome: and let us match with these Aragon brethren, one Vitoldus Duke of Lithuania, the cruelty of whom, constrained his own subjects to hang themselves for fear lest they should fall into his furious and bloody hands. We may confess also these brutal brethren to be more butcherly than ever Otho Earl of Montferrato, and Prince of Urbin was, who caused a yeoman of his chamber to be wrapped in a sheet powdered with sulphur and brimstone, and afterwards kindled with a candle, was scalded and consumed to death, because he waked not at an hour by him appointed: let us not excuse them also from some affinity with Manfredus the son of Henry the second emperor, who smoldered his own father, being an old man, between two coverlets. These former furies might have some excuse to cover their cruelty, but these had no other colour but a certain beastly madness which moved them to kill those little children their nephews, who by no means could prejudice or annoy the Duke of Malfi or his title, in the succession of his Duchy, the mother having withdrawn her goods, and had her dowry assigned her: but a wicked heart wrapt in malice must needs bring forth semblable works. In the time of these murders the unfortunate lover kept himself at Milan with his son Frederick, and vowed himself to the Lord Silvio Savello, who that time besieged the Castle of Milan, in the behalf of Maximilian Sforcia, which in the end he conquered and recovered by composition with the French within. But that charge being

achieved, the general Savello marched from thence to Cremona with his camp, whither Bologna durst not follow, but repaired to the Marquis of Briton, in which time the Aragon brethren so wrought as his goods were confiscate at Naples, and he driven to his shifts to use the golden ducats which the Duchess gave him to relieve himself at Milan, whose death although it were advertised by many, yet he could not be persuaded to believe the same, for that divers which went about to betray him, and feared he should fly from Milan, kept his beak under the water, (as the proverb is,) and assured him both of the life and welfare of his spouse, and that shortly his brethren-in-law would be reconciled because many noble men favoured him well, and desired his return home to his country. Fed and filled with that vain hope, he remained more than a year at Milan, frequenting good company, who was well entertained of the richest merchants and best gentlemen of the city : and above all other, he had familiar access to the house of the Lady Hippolita Bentivoglia, where upon a day after dinner, taking his lute in hand, whereon he could exceedingly well play, he began to sing a sonnet, which he had composed upon the discourse of his misfortune, the tenor whereof ensueth.

*The Song of Antonio Bologna, the husband of the
Duchess of Malfi.*

If love, the death, or tract of time, have measured my distress,
Or if my beating sorrows may my languor well express :
Then love come soon to visit me, which most my heart desires,
And so my dolour finds some ease, through flames of fancy's fires.

The time runs out his rolling course, for to prolong mine ease,
To th' end I shall enjoy my love, and heart himself appease,
A cruel dart brings happy death, my soul then rest shall find :
And sleeping body under tomb, shall dream time out of mind,
And yet the love, the time, nor death, looks not how I decrease :
Nor giveth ear to anything, of this my woeful peace.
Full far I am from my good hap, or half the joy I crave,
Whereby I change my state with tears, and draw full near my grave.
The courteous Gods that gives me life, now moves the planets all :
For to arrest my groaning ghost, and hence my spirit to call.
Yet from them still I am separ'd, by things unequal here,
Not meant the Gods may be unjust, that breeds my changing cheer.
For they provide by their foresight, that none shall do me harm :
But she whose blazing beauty bright, hath brought me in a charm.
My mistress hath the power alone, to rid me from this woe :
Whose thrall I am, for whom I die, to whom my spirit shall go.
Away my soul, go from the griefs, that thee oppresseth still,
And let thy dolour witness bear, how much I want my will.
For since that love and death himself, delights in guiltless blood,
Let time transport my troubled spirit, where destiny seemeth good.

This song ended, the poor gentleman could not forbear from pouring forth his lukewarm tears, which abundantly ran down his heavy face, and his panting sighs truly discovered the alteration of his mind, which moved each wight of that assembly to pity his mournful state : and one specially of no acquaintance, and yet knew the devices that the Aragon brethren had trained and contrived against him : that unacquainted gentleman his name was Delio, one very well learned, and of trim invention, who very excellently hath indited in the Italian vulgar tongue. This Delio knowing the gentleman to be husband to the deceased Duchess of Malfi, came unto him, and taking him aside, said : “ Sir, albeit I have no great acquaintance with you, this being

the first time that ever I saw you, to my remembrance, so it is, that virtue hath such force, and maketh gentle minds so amorous of their like, as when they do behold each other, they feel themselves coupled as it were in a band of minds, that impossible it is to divide the same: now knowing what you be, and the good and commendable qualities in you, I count it my duty to reveal that which may chance to breed you damage. Know you then, that I of late was in company with a nobleman of Naples, which is in this city, banded with a certain company of horsemen, who told me that he had a special charge to kill you, and therefore prayed me (as it seemed) to require you not to come in his sight, to the intent he might not be constrained to do that which should offend his conscience, and grieve the same all the days of his life: moreover I have worse tidings to tell you: the Duchess your wife dead by violent hand in prison, and the most part of them that were in her company: besides this assure yourself, that if you do not take heed to that which this Neapolitan captain hath deferred, other will do and execute the same. This much I have thought good to tell you, because it would very much grieve me, that a gentleman so excellent as you be, should be murdered in that miserable wise, and I should deem myself unworthy of life, if knowing these practices I should dissemble the same." Whereunto Bologna answered: "Sir Delio, I am greatly bound unto you, and give you hearty thanks for the good will you bear me. But in the conspiracy of the brethren of Aragon, and of the death of my lady, you be deceived, and some have given you wrong intelligence: for within these

two days I received letters from Naples, wherein I am advertised, that the right honourable and reverend Cardinal and his brother be almost appeased, and that my goods shall be rendered again, and my dear wife restored." "Ah sir," said Delio, "how you be beguiled and fed with follies, and nourished with sleights of court: assure yourself that they which write these trifles, make such shameful sale of your life, as the butcher doth of his flesh in the shambles, and so wickedly betray you, as impossible it is to invent a treason more detestable: but bethink you well thereof." When he had said so, he took his leave, and joined himself in company of fine and pregnant wits, there assembled together. In the meantime, the cruel spirit of the Aragon brethren were not yet appeased with the former murders, but needs must finish the last act of Bologna his tragedy by loss of his life, to keep his wife and children company, so well in another world as he was united with them in love in this frail and transitory passage. The Neapolitan gentleman before spoken of by Delio, which had taken this enterprise to satisfy the barbarous Cardinal to bereave his countryman of life, having changed his mind, and deferring from day to day to sort the same to effect, it chanced that a Lombard of larger conscience than the other, inveigled with covetousness, and hired for ready money, practised the death of the Duchess's poor husband: this bloody beast was called Daniel de Bozola that had charge of a certain band of footmen in Milan. This new Judas and pestilent man-queller, who within certain days after knowing that Bologna oftentimes repaired to hear service at the Church

and convent of St. Francis, secretly conveyed himself in ambush, hard besides the Church of St. James, (being accompanied with a certain troop of soldiers) to assail unfortunate Bologna, who was sooner slain than he was able to think upon defence, and whose mishap was such, as he which killed him had good leisure to save himself by reason of the little pursuit made after him. Behold here the noble fact of a Cardinal, and what savour it hath of Christian purity, to commit a slaughter for a fact done many years past upon a poor gentleman which never thought him hurt. Is this the sweet observation of the Apostles, of whom they vaunt themselves to be the successors and followers? And yet we cannot find nor read, that the Apostles, or those that stepped in their trade of life, hired ruffians, and murderers to cut the throats of them which did them hurt. But what? it was in the time of Julius the Second, who was more martial than Christian, and loved better to shed blood than give blessing to the people. Such end had the unfortunate marriage of him, which ought to have contented himself with that degree and honour that he had acquired by the deeds and glory of his virtues, so much by each wight recommended: we ought never to climb higher than our force permitteth, ne yet surmount the bounds of duty, and less suffer ourselves to be haled fondly forth with desire of brutal sensuality. Which sin is of such nature, that he never giveth over the party whom he mastereth, until he hath brought him to the shame of some notable folly. You see the miserable discourse of a princess's love, that was not very wise, and of a gentleman that had forgotten his estate, which ought

to serve for a looking-glass to them which be over hardy in making enterprises, and do not measure their ability with the greatness of their attempts : where they ought to maintain themselves in reputation, and bear the title of well advised : foreseeing their ruin to be example for all posterity, as may be seen by the death of Bologna, and by all them which sprang of him, and of his unfortunate spouse his lady and mistress. But we have discoursed enough hereof, sith diversity of other histories do call us to bring the same in place, which were not much more happy than the bloody end of those, whose history ye have already heard.

A LADY OF BOHEMIA

Two barons of Hungary assuring themselves to obtain their suit to a fair lady of Bohemia, received of her a strange and marvellous repulse, to their great shame and infamy, cursing the time that ever they adventured an enterprise so foolish.

PENELOPE, the woeful wife of absent Ulysses, in her tedious longing for the home return of that her adventurous knight, assailed with careful heart amid the troop of amorous suitors, and within the bowels of her royal palace, deserved no greater fame for her valiant encounters and stout defence of the invincible and adamant fort of her chastity than this Bohemian lady doth by resisting two mighty barons, that cannoned the walls and well-mured rampart of her pudicity. For being threatened in his prince's court, whither all the well-trained crew of each science and profession did make repair, being menaced by Venus' band, which not only summoned her fort, and gave her a camisado by thick alarms, but also forced the place by fierce assault, she like a courageous and politic captain, gave those brave and lusty soldiers a foul repulse, and in end taking them captives, urged them for their victuals to fall to woman's toil, more shameful than shameless Sardanapalus amid his amorous troop. I need not amplify by length of preamble the fame of this

Bohemian lady, nor yet briefly recount the triumph of her victory : vain it were also by glorious hymns to chant the wisdom of her believing make, who not careless of her life, employed his care to serve his prince, and by service achieved the cause that drove him to a soldier's state. But yet for trustless faith in the prime conference of his future port, he consulted with a Pollaco for a compounded drug to ease his suspect mind, which medicine so eased his malady, as it not only preserved him from the infected humour, but also made her happy for ever. Such fall the events of valiant minds, though many times mother jealousy, that cankered witch, steppeth in her foot to annoy the well-disposed heart. For had he joined to his valiance credit of his loving wife without the blind advice of such as profess that black and lying science, double glory he had gained : once for endeavouring by service to seek honour : the second, for absolute trust in her, that never meant to beguile him, as by her first answer to his first motion appeareth. But what is to be objected against the barons ? Let them answer for their fault, in this discourse ensuing : which so lessoneth all noble minds, as warily they ought to beware how they adventure upon the honour of ladies, who be not altogether of one self and yielding tramp, but well forged and steeled in the shamefast shop of loyalty, which armour defendeth them against the fond skirmishes and unconsidered conflicts of Venus' wanton band. The majesties also of the king and queen are to be advanced above the stars for their wise dissuasion of those noblemen from their hot and heedless enterprise, and then their justice for due execution of their

forfeit, the particularity of which discourse in this wise doth begin. Mathie Corvine sometime King of Hungary, about the year of our Lord 1458 was a valiant man of war and of goodly personage. He was the first that was famous or feared of the Turks, of any prince that governed that kingdom. And amongst other his virtues, so well in arms and letters, as in liberality and courtesy he excelled all the princes that reigned in his time. He had to wife Queen Beatrice of Aragon, the daughter of old Ferdinando, King of Naples, and sister to the mother of Alphonsus, Duke of Ferrara, who in learning, good conditions and all other virtues generally dispersed in her, was a surpassing princess, and showed herself not only a courteous and liberal gentlewoman to King Mathie her husband, but to all other that for virtue seemed worthy of honour and reward : in such wise as to the court of these two noble princes, repaired the most notable men of all nations that were given to any kind of good exercise, and every of them according to their desert and degree welcomed and entertained. It chanced in this time, that a knight of Bohemia, the vassal of King Mathie, for that he was likewise king of that country, born of a noble house, very valiant and well-exercised in arms, fell in love with a passing fair gentlewoman of like nobility and reputed to be the fairest of all the country, and had a brother that was but a poor gentleman, not lucky to the goods of fortune. This Bohemian knight was also not very rich, having only a castle with certain revenues thereunto, which was scarce able to yield unto him any great maintenance of living. Falling in love then with this fair gentlewoman he demanded

her in marriage of her brother, and with her had but a very little dowry. And this knight not well foreseeing his poor estate, brought his wife home to his house, and there, at more leisure considering the same, began to feel his lack and penury, and how hardly and scant his revenues were able to maintain his port. He was a very honest and gentle person, and one that delighted not by any means to burden and fine his tenants, contenting himself with that revenue his ancestors left him, the same amounting to no great yearly rent. When this gentleman perceived that he stood in need of extraordinary relief, after many and divers considerations with himself, he purposed to follow the court, and to serve King Mathie his sovereign lord and master, there by his diligence and experience, to seek means for ability to sustain his wife and himself. But so great and fervent was the love that he bare unto his lady, as he thought it impossible for him to live one hour without her, and yet judged it not best to have her with him to the court, for avoiding of further charges incident to courting ladies, whose delight and pleasure resteth in the toys and tricks of the same, that cannot be well avoided in poor gentlemen, without their names in the mercers' or drapers' journals, a heavy thing for them to consider if for their disport they like to walk the streets. The daily thinking thereupon brought the poor gentleman to great sorrow and heaviness. The lady that was young, wise and discreet, marking the manner of her husband, feared that he had some misliking of her. Wherefore upon a day she thus said unto him: "Dear husband, willingly would I desire a good turn at your hand, if I wist I should not

displease you." "Demand what you will," (said the knight) "if I can, I shall gladly perform it, because I do esteem your satisfaction, as I do mine own life." Then the lady very soberly prayed him, that he would open unto her the cause of that discontentment, which he showed outwardly to have, for that his mind and behaviour seemed to be contrary to ordinary custom, and contrived day and night in sighs, avoiding the company of them that were wont specially to delight him. The knight, hearing his lady's request, paused a while and then said unto her: "My well-beloved wife, for so much as you desire to understand my thought and mind, and whereof it cometh that I am sad and pensive, I will tell you: all the heaviness wherewith you see me to be affected, doth tend to this end. Fain would I devise that you and I may in honour live together, according to our calling. For in respect of our parentage, our livelihood is very slender, the occasion whereof were our parents who mortgaged their lands, and consumed a great part of their goods that our ancestors left them. I daily thinking here-upon, and conceiving in my head divers imaginations, can devise no means but one, that in my fancy seemeth best, which is, that I go to the court of our sovereign lord Mathie, who at this present is inferring wars upon the Turk, at whose hands I do not mistrust to receive good entertainment, being a most liberal prince, and one that esteemeth all such as be valiant and active. And I for my part will so govern myself (by God's grace) that by desert I will procure such living and favour as hereafter we may live in our old days a quiet life to our great stay and comfort: for although Fortune hitherto hath not favoured that

state of parentage, whereof we be, I doubt not with noble courage to win that in despite of fortune's teeth, which obstinately hitherto she hath denied. And the more assured am I of this determination, because at other times I have served under the Vaivoda in Transylvania, against the Turk, where many times I have been required to serve also in the court, by that honourable gentleman the Count of Cilia. But when I did consider the beloved company of you, dear wife, the sweetest companion that ever wight possessed, I thought it impossible for me to forbear your presence, which if I should do, I were worthy to sustain that dishonour, which a great number of careless gentlemen do, who following their private gain and will, abandon their young and fair wives, neglecting the fire which nature hath instilled to the delicate bodies of such tender creatures. Fearing therewithal, that so soon as I should depart, the lusty young barons and gentlemen of the country would pursue the gain of that love, the price whereof I do esteem above the crown of the greatest emperor in all the world, and would not forgo for all the riches and precious jewels in the fertile soil of Araby, who no doubt would swarm together in greater heaps than ever did the wooers of Penelope, within the famous grange of Ithaca, the house of wandering Ulysses. Which pursuit if they did attain, I should for ever hereafter be ashamed to show my face before those that be of valour and regard. And this is the whole effect of the scruple (sweet wife) that hindereth me, to seek for our better estate and fortune." When he had spoken these words, he held his peace. The gentlewoman which was wise and stout, perceiving

the great love that her husband bare her, when he had stayed himself from talk, with good and merry countenance answered him in this wise: "Sir Ulrico," (which was the name of the gentleman) "I in like manner as you have done, have devised and thought upon the nobility and birth of our ancestors, from whose state and port (and that without our fault and crime) we be far wide and divided. Notwithstanding I determined to set a good face upon the matter, and to make so much of our painted sheath as I could. Indeed I confess myself to be a woman, and you men do say that woman's hearts be faint and feeble: but to be plain with you, the contrary is in me, my heart is so stout and ambitious as peradventure not meet and consonant to power and ability, although we women will find no lack if our hearts have pith and strength enough to bear it out. And fain would I support the state wherein my mother maintained me. Howbeit for mine own part (to God I yield the thanks) I can so moderate and stay my little great heart, that contented and satisfied I can be, with that which your ability can bear, and pleasure command. But to come to the point, I say that debating with myself of our state as you full wisely do, I do verily think that you being a young gentleman, lusty and valiant, no better remedy or device can be found than for you to aspire and seek the king's favour and service. And it must needs rise and redound to your gain and preferment, for that I hear you say the king's majesty doth already know you. Wherefore I do suppose that his grace (a skilful gentleman to weigh and esteem the virtue and valour of each man) cannot choose but

reward and recompense the well-doer to his singular contentation and comfort. Of this mine opinion I durst not before this time utter word or sign for fear of your displeasure. But now sith yourself hath opened the way and means, I have presumed to discover the same, do what shall seem best unto your good pleasure. And I for my part, although that I am a woman (accordingly as I said even now) that by Nature am desirous of honour, and to show myself abroad more rich and sumptuous than other, yet in respect of our fortune, I shall be contented so long as I live to continue with you in this our castle, where by the grace of God I will not fail to serve, love and obey you, and to keep your house in that moderate sort, as the revenues shall be able to maintain the same. And no doubt but that poor living we have orderly used, shall be sufficient to find us two, and five or six servants with a couple of horses, and so to live a quiet and merry life. If God do send us any children, till they come to lawful age, we will with our poor living bring them up so well as we can, and then to prefer them to some noblemen's services, with whom by God's grace they may acquire honour and living, to keep them in their aged days. And I do trust that we two shall use such mutual love and rejoice, that so long as our life doth last in wealth and woe, our contented minds shall rest satisfied. But I, weighing the stoutness of your mind, do know that you esteem more an ounce of honour, than all the gold that is in the world. For as your birth is noble, so is your heart and stomach. And therefore many times seeing your great heaviness and manifold musings and studies, I have wondered

with myself whereof they should proceed, and amongst my other conceits, I thought that either my behaviour and order of dealing, or my personage did not like you : or else that your wonted gentle mind and disposition had been altered and transformed into some other nature: many times also I was content to think that the cause of your disquiet mind did rise upon the disuse of arms, wherein you were wont daily to accustom yourself amongst the troops of the honourable, a company indeed most worthy of your presence. Revolving many times these and suchlike cogitations, I have sought means by such allurements as I could devise, to ease and mitigate your troubled mind, and to withdraw the great unquiet and care wherewith I saw you to be affected. Because I do esteem you above all the world, deeming your only grief to be my double pain, your aching finger, a fervent fever fit, and the least woe you can sustain most bitter death to me, that loveth you more dearly than myself. And for that I do perceive that you are determined to serve our noble king, the sorrow which without doubt will assail me by reason of your absence, I will sweeten and lenify with contentation, to see your commendable desire appeased and quiet. And the pleasant memory of your valiant facts beguile my pensive thoughts, hoping our next meeting shall be more joyful than this our disjunction and departure heavy. And where you doubt of the confluence and repair of the dishonest which shall attempt the winning and subduing of mine heart and unspotted body, hitherto inviolably kept from the touch of any person, cast from you that fear, expel from your mind that fond conceit : for death

shall sooner close these mortal eyes, than my chastity shall be defiled. For pledge whereof I have none other thing to give but my true and simple faith, which if you dare trust it shall hereafter appear so firm and inviolable as no spark of suspicion shall enter your careful mind, which I may well term to be careful because some care beforehand doth rise of my behaviour in your absence. The trial wherefore shall yield sure evidence and testimony, by passing my careful life which I may with better cause so term in your absence, that God knoweth will be right pensive and careful unto me, who joyeth in nothing else but in your welfare. Nevertheless all means and ways shall be agreeable unto my mind for your assurance, and shall breed in me a wonderful contentation, which lusteth after nothing but your satisfaction. And if you list to close me up in one of the castle towers till your return, right glad I am there to continue an anchoress' life: so that the same may ease your desired mind." The knight with great delight gave ear to the answer of his wife, and when she had ended her talk, he began to reply unto her: " My well-beloved, I do like well and greatly commended the stoutness of your heart, it pleaseth me greatly to see the same agreeable unto mine. You have lightened the same from inestimable woe by understanding your conceived purpose and determination to guard and preserve your honour, praying you therein to persevere, still remembering that when a woman hath lost her honour, she hath forgone the chiefest jewel she hath in this life, and deserveth no longer to be called woman. And touching my talk proposed unto you although it be of

great importance, yet I mean not to depart so soon. But if it do come to effect I assure thee wife, I will leave thee lady and mistress of all that I have. In the meantime I will consider better of my business, and consult with my friends and kinsmen, and then determine what is best to be done. Till when let us live and spend our time so merrily as we can." To be short there was nothing that so much molested the knight, as the doubt he had of his wife, for that she was a very fine and fair young gentlewoman: and therefore he still devised and imagined what assurance he might find of her behaviour in his absence. And resting in this imagination, not long after it came to pass that the knight being in company with divers gentlemen, and talking of sundry matters, a tale was told what chanced to a gentleman of the country which had obtained the favour and goodwill of a woman, by means of an old man called Pollaco, which had the name to be a famous enchanter and physician, dwelling at Cutiano, a city of Bohemia, where plenty of silver mines and other metals is. The knight, whose castle was not far from Cutiano, had occasion to repair unto that city, and according to his desire found out this Pollaco, which was a very old man, and talking with him of divers things, perceived him to be of great skill. In the end he entreated him, that for so much as he had done pleasure to many for apprehension of their love, he would also instruct him, how he might be assured that his wife did keep herself honest all the time of his absence, and that by certain signs he might have sure knowledge whether she brake her faith, by sending his honesty into Cornwall. Such

vain trust this knight reposed in the lying science of sorcery, which although to many others is found deceitful, yet to him served for sure evidence of his wife's fidelity. This Pollaco which was a very cunning enchanter as you have heard, said unto him : " Sir, you demand a very strange matter, such as wherewith never hitherto I have been acquainted, ne yet searched the depth of those hidden secrets, a thing not commonly sued for, ne yet practised by me. For who is able to make assurance of a woman's chastity, or tell by signs except he were at the deed's doing, that she had done amiss ? Or who can gain by proctor's writ, to summon or sue at spiritual court, peremptorily to affirm by never so good evidence or testimony, that a woman hath hazarded her honesty, except he sware *rem* to be in *re*, which the greatest civilian that ever Padua bred never saw by process duly tried ? Shall I then warrant you the honesty of such slippery cattle, prone and ready to lust, easy to be vanquished by the suits of earnest pursuers ? But blameworthy surely I am, thus generally to speak : for some I know, although not many, for whose poor honesties I dare adventure mine own. And yet that number how small so ever it be, is worthy all due reverence and honour. Notwithstanding (because you seem to be an honest gentleman) of that knowledge which I have, I will not be greatly squeamish, a certain secret experiment indeed I have, wherewith perchance I may satisfy your demand. And this is it : I can by mine art in small time, by certain compositions, frame a woman's image, which you continually in a little box may carry about you, and so oft as you list behold the same. If the

wife do not break her marriage faith, you shall still see the same so fair and well coloured as it was at the first making, and seem as though it newly came from the painter's shop, but if perchance she mean to abuse her honesty, the same will wax pale, and indeed committing that filthy fact, suddenly the colour will be black, as arrayed with coal or other filth, and the smell thereof will not be very pleasant, but at all times when she is attempted or pursued, the colour will be so yellow as gold." This marvellous secret device greatly pleased the knight verily believing the same to be true, specially much moved and assured by the fame bruited abroad of his science, whereof the citizens of Cutiano, told very strange and incredible things. When the price was paid for this precious jewel, he received the image, and joyfully returned home to his castle, where tarrying certain days, he determined to repair to the court of the glorious King Mathie, making his wife privy of his intent. Afterwards when he had disposed his household matters in order, he committed the government thereof to his wife, and having prepared all necessaries for his voyage, to the great sorrow and grief of his beloved, he departed and arrived at Alba Regale, where that time the king lay with Beatrix his wife, of whom he was joyfully received and entertained. He had not long continued in the court, but he had obtained and won the favour and good will of all men. The king which knew him full well very honourably placed him in his court, and by him accomplished divers and many weighty affairs, which very wisely and trustily he brought to pass according to the king's mind and pleasure.

Afterwards he was made colonel of a certain number of footmen sent by the king against the Turks to defend a hold which the enemies of God began to assail under the conduct of Mustapha Basca, which conduct he so well directed, and therein stoutly behaved himself, as he chased all the infidels out of those coasts, winning thereby the name of a most valiant soldier and prudent captain, whereby he marvellously gained the favour and grace of the king, who (over and besides his daily entertainment) gave unto him a castle, and the revenue in fee farm for ever. Such rewards deserve all valiant men, which for the honour of their prince and country do willingly employ their service, worthy no doubt of great regard and cherishing, upon their home return, because they hate idleness to win glory, devising rather to spend whole days in field, than hours in court, which this worthy knight deserved, who not able to sustain his poor estate, by politic wisdom, and prowess of arms endeavoured to serve his lord and country, wherein surely he made a very good choice. Then he devoutly praised God, for that He put into his mind such a noble enterprise, trusting daily to achieve greater fame and glory: but the greater was his joy and contentation, because the image of his wife enclosed within a box, which still he carried about him in his purse, continued fresh of colour without alteration. It was noised in the court how this valiant knight Ulrico had in Bohemia the fairest and goodliest lady to his wife, that lived either in Bohemia or Hungary. It chanced as a certain company of young gentlemen in the court were together (amongst whom was this knight) that a Hungarian

baron said unto him : “ How is it possible, Sir Ulrico, being a year and a half since you departed out of Bohemia, that you have no mind to return to see your wife, who, as the common fame reporteth, is one of the goodliest women of all the country : truly it seemeth to me, that you care not for her, which were great pity if her beauty be correspondent to her fame.” “ Sir ” (quod Ulrico) “ what her beauty is I refer unto the world, but howsoever you esteem me to care of her, you shall understand that I do love her, and will do so during my life. And the cause why I have not visited her of long time, is no little proof of the great assurance I have of her virtue and honest life. The argument of her virtue I prove, for that she is contented that I should serve my lord and king, and sufficient it is for me to give her intelligence of my state and welfare, which many times by letters at opportunity I fail not to do : the proof of my faith is evident by reason of my bounden duty to our sovereign lord of whom I have received so great and ample benefits, and the warfare which I use in his grace’s service upon the frontiers of his realm against the enemies of Christ, whereunto I bear more goodwill than I do to wedlock love, preferring duty to prince before marriage : albeit my wife’s faith and constancy is such, as freely I may spend my life without care of her devoir, being assured that besides her beauty she is wise, virtuous and honest, and loveth me above all worldly things, tendering me as dearly as she doth the balls of her own eyes.” “ You have stoutly said,” (answered the baron) “ in defence of your wife’s chastity, whereof she can make unto herself no great warrantise, because a woman sometimes

will be in mind not to be moved at the requests, and gifts offered by the greatest prince of the world who afterwards within a day upon the only sight and view of some lusty youth, at one simple word uttered with a few tears, and shorter suit, yieldeth to his request. And what is she then that can conceive such assurance in herself ? What is he that knoweth the secrets of hearts which be impenetrable ? Surely none as I suppose, except God Himself. A woman of her own nature is movable and pliant, and is the most ambitious creature of the world. And (by God) no woman do I know but that she lusteth and desireth to be beloved, required, sued unto, honoured and cherished ? And oftentimes it cometh to pass that the most crafty dames which think with feigned looks to feed their divers lovers, be the first that thrust their heads into the amorous nets, and like little birds in hard distress of weather be caught in lovers' lime-twigs. Whereby, Sir Ulrico, I do not see that your wife (above all other women compact of flesh and bone) hath such privilege from God, but that she may be soon enticed and corrupted." " Well, Sir," (said the Bohemian knight) " I am persuaded of that which I have spoken, and verily do believe the effect of my belief most true. Every man knoweth his own affairs, and the fool knoweth better what he hath, than his neighbours do, be they never so wise. Believe you what you think for good. I mean not to digress from that which I conceive. And suffer me (I pray you) to believe what I list, sith belief cannot hurt me, nor yet your discredit can hinder my belief, being free for each man in semblable chances to think, and believe what his mind lusteth and

liketh." There were many other lords and gentlemen of the court present at their talk, and as we commonly see (at suchlike meetings) every man uttereth his mind: whereupon sundry opinions were produced touching that question. And because divers men be of divers natures, and many presuming upon the pregnancy of their wise heads, there rose some stir about that talk, each man obstinate in his alleged reason, more froward peradventure than reason, more rightly required: the communication grew so hot and talk brake forth so loud, as the same was reported to the queen. The good lady sorry to hear tell of such strife within her court, abhorring naturally all controversy and contention, sent for the parties, and required them from point to point to make recital of the beginning, and circumstance of their reasons and arguments. And when she understood the effect of all their talk, she said, that every man at his own pleasure might believe what he list, affirming it to be presumptuous and extreme folly, to judge all women to be of one disposition, in like sort as it were a great error to say that all men be of one quality and condition: the contrary by daily experience manifestly appearing. For both in men and women, there is so great difference and variety of natures, as there be heads and wits. And how it is commonly seen that two brothers and sisters, born at one birth, be yet of contrary natures and complexions, of manners, and conditions so diverse, as the thing which shall please the one, is altogether unpleasant to the other. Whereupon the queen concluded, that the Bohemian knight had good reason to continue that good and honest credit of his wife, as having proved her fidelity

of long time, wherein she showed herself to be very wise and discreet. Now because (as many times we see) the natures and appetites of divers men be insatiable, and one man sometimes more foolish hardy than another, even so (to say the truth) were those two Hungarian barons, who seeming wise in their own conceits, one of them said to the queen in this manner : “ Madam, your grace doth well maintain the sex of womankind, because you be a woman. For by nature it is given to that kind, stoutly to stand in defence of themselves, because their imbecility, and weakness otherwise would bewray them : and although good reasons might be alleged to open the causes of their debility, and why they be not able to attain the haut excellency of man, yet for this time I do not mean to be tedious unto your grace, lest the little heart of woman should rise and display that conceit which is wrapt within that little mould. But to return to this chaste lady, through whom our talk began, if we might crave licence of your majesty, and safe conduct of this gentleman to know her dwelling place, and have leave to speak to her, we doubt not but to break with our battering talk the adamant walls of her chastity that is so famous, and carry away that spoil which victoriously we shall achieve.” “ I know not ” answered the Bohemian knight, “ what ye can or will do, but sure I am, that hitherto I am not deceived.” Many things were spoken there, and sundry opinions of either parties alleged, in end the two Hungarian barons persuaded themselves, and made their vaunts that they were able to climb the skies, and both would attempt and also bring to pass any enterprise were it never so

great, affirming their former offer by oath, and offering to gage all the lands and goods they had, that within the space of five months they would either of them obtain the gentlewoman's good will to do what they list, so that the knight were bound, neither to return home, ne yet to advertise her of their determination. The queen and all the standers-by, laughed heartily at this their offer, mocking and jesting at their foolish and youthful conceits. Which the barons perceiving said: "You think Madam, that we speak triflingly, and be not able to accomplish this our proposed enterprise, but, Madam, may it please you to give us leave, we mean by earnest attempt to give proof thereof." And as they were thus in reasoning and debating the matter, the king (hearing tell of this large offer made by the barons) came into the place where the queen was, at such time as she was about to dissuade them from the frantic device. Before whom he being entered the chamber, the two barons fell down upon their knees, and humbly besought his grace, that the compact made between Sir Ulrico and them, might proceed, disclosing unto him in few words the effect of all their talk, which frankly was granted by the king. But the barons added a proviso, than when they had won their wager, the knight by no means should hurt his wife, and from that time forth should give over his false opinion, that women were not naturally given to the suits and requests of amorous persons. The Bohemian knight, who was assured of his wife's great honesty and loyal faith, believed so true as the gospel, the proportion and quality of the image, who in all the time that he was far off, never perceived

the same to be either pale or black, but at that time looking upon the image, he perceived a certain yellow colour to rise, as he thought his wife was by some love pursued, but yet suddenly it returned again to his natural hue, which boldened him to say these words to the Hungarian barons : “ Ye be a couple of pleasant and unbelieving gentlemen, and have conceived so fantastical opinion, as ever men of your calling did : but sith you proceed in your obstinate folly, and will needs gage all the lands and goods you have, that you be able to vanquish my wife’s honest and chaste heart, I am contented, for the singular credit which I repose in her, to join with you, and will pledge the poor living I have for proof of mine opinion, and shall accomplish all other your requests made here, before the majesties of the king and queen. And therefore may it please your highness, sith this fond device cannot be beaten out of their heads, to give licence unto those noblemen, the Lords Vladislao and Alberto, (so were they called) to put in proof the merry conceit of their disposed minds (whereof they do so greatly brag) and I by your good grace and favour, am content to agree to their demands.” “ And we,” answered the Hungarians, “ do once again affirm the same which we have spoken.” The king willing to have them give over that strife, was entreated to the contrary by the barons : whereupon the king perceiving their follies, caused a decree of the bargain to be put in writing, either parties interchangeably subscribing the same. Which done, they took their leaves. Afterwards, the two Hungarians began to put their enterprise in order, and agreed between themselves, Alberto to be the first that should adventure upon

the lady. And that within six weeks after upon his return, the Lord Vladislao should proceed. These things concluded, and all furnitures for their several journeys disposed, the Lord Alberto departed in good order, with two servants directly travelling to the castle of the Bohemian knight, where being arrived, he lighted at an inn of the town adjoining to the castle, and demanding of the host, the conditions of the lady, he understood that she was a very fair woman, and that her honesty, and love towards her husband far excelled her beauty. Which words nothing dismayed the amorous baron, but when he had pulled off his boots, and richly arrayed himself, he repaired to the castle, and knocking at the gates, gave the lady to understand that he was come to see her. She which was a courteous gentlewoman, caused him to be brought in, and gently gave him honourable entertainment. The baron greatly mused upon the beauty, and goodliness of the lady, singularly commending her honest order and behaviour. And being set down, the young gentleman said unto her: “Madam, moved with the fame of your surpassing beauty, which now I see to be more excellent than fame with her swiftest wings is able to carry: I am come from the court to view and see if that were true, or whether lying bruits had scattered their vulgar talk in vain: but finding the same far more fine and pure than erst I did expect, I crave licence of your ladyship, to conceive none offence of this my bold and rude attempt.” And herewithal he began to join many trifling and vain words, which dallying suitors by heat of lusty blood be wont to shoot forth, to declare

themselves not to be speechless or tongue-tied. Which the lady well espying speedily imagined into what port his rotten bark would arrive : wherefore in the end when she saw his ship at road, began to enter in pretty loving talk, by little and little to encourage his fond attempt. The baron, thinking he had caught the eel by the tail, not well practised in Cicero his school, ceased not fondly to contrive the time, by making her believe that he was far in love. The lady weary (God wot) of his fond behaviour and amorous reasons, and yet not to seem scornful, made him good countenance, in such wise as the Hungarian two or three days did nothing else but proceed in vain pursuit. She perceiving him to be but a hawk of the first coat, devised to recompense his follies with such entertainment, as during his life, he should keep the same in good remembrance. Wherefore not long after, feigning as though his great wisdom, uttered by eloquent talk, had subdued her, she said thus unto him : “ My lord, the reasons you produce, and your pleasant gesture in my house, have so enchanted me, that impossible it is, but I must needs agree unto your will ; for where I never thought during life, to stain the purity of marriage bed, and determined continually to preserve myself inviolably for my husband : your noble grace and courteous behaviour have (I say) so bewitched me, that ready I am to be at your commandment, humbly beseeching your honour to beware, that knowledge hereof may not come unto mine husband’s ears, who is so fierce and cruel, and loveth me so dearly, as no doubt he will without further trial either himself kill me, or otherwise procure my death : and to the intent none

of my house may suspect our doings, I shall desire you tomorrow in the morning about nine of the clock, which is the accustomed time of your repair hither, to come unto my castle, wherein when you be entered, speedily to mount up to the chamber of the highest tower, over the door whereof, ye shall find the arms of my husband, entailed in marble: and when you be entered in, to shut the door fast after you, and in the meantime I will wait and provide, that none shall molest and trouble us, and then we shall bestow ourselves for accomplishment of that which your love desireth." Now in very deed this chamber was a very strong prison ordained in ancient time by the progenitors of that territory, to imprison and punish the vassals and tenants of the same, for offences and crimes committed. The baron hearing this liberal offer of the lady, thinking he had obtained the sum of all his joy, so glad as if he had conquered a whole kingdom, the best contented man alive, thanking the lady for her courteous answer, departed and returned to his inn. God knoweth upon how merry a pin the heart of this young baron was set, and after he had liberally banqueted his host and hostess, pleasantly disposing himself to mirth and recreation, he went to bed, where joy so lightened his merry head, as no sleep at all could close his eyes, such be the savage pangs of those that aspire to like delights as the best reclaimer of the wildest hawk could never take more pain or devise more shifts to man the same for the better achieving of her prey than did this brave baron for bringing his enterprise to effect. The next day early in the morning he rose, dressing himself with the

sweet perfumes, and putting on his finest suit of apparel, at the appointed hour he went to the castle, and so secretly as he could, according to the lady's instruction, he conveyed himself up to the chamber which he found open, and when he was entered, he shut the same, the manner of the door was such, as none within could open it without a key, and besides the strong lock, it had both bar and bolt on the outside, with such fastening as the devil himself being locked within, could not break forth. The lady which waited hard by for his coming, so soon as she perceived that the door was shut, stepped unto the same, and both double-locked the door, and also without she barred, and fast bolted the same, carrying the key away with her. This chamber was in the highest tower of the house (as is before said) wherein was placed a bed with good furniture, the window whereof was so high, that none could look out without a ladder. The other parts thereof were in good and convenient order, apt and meet for an honest prison. When the Lord Alberto was within, he sat down, waiting (as the Jews do for Messias) when the lady according to her appointment should come. And as he was in this expectation building castles in the air, and devising a thousand chimeras in his brain, behold he heard one to open a little wicket that was in the door of that chamber, which was as strait, as scarcely able to receive a loaf of bread, or cruse of wine, used to be sent to the prisoners. He thinking that it had been the lady, rose up, and heard the noise of a little girl, who looking in at the hole, thus said unto him: "My Lord Alberto, the Lady Barbara my mistress (for that was

her name) hath sent me thus to say unto you : ' That forasmuch as you be come into this place, by countenance of love, to despoil her of her honour, she hath imprisoned you like a thief, according to your desert, and purposeth to make you suffer penance, equal to the measure of your offence. Wherefore so long as you shall remain in this place, she mindeth to force you to gain your bread and drink with the art of spinning, as poor women do for gain of their living, meaning thereby to cool the heat of your lusty youth, and to make you taste the sorrow of sauce meet for them to assay, that go about to rob ladies of their honour : she bade me likewise to tell you, that the more yarn you spin, the greater shall be the abundance and delicacy of your fare, the greater pain you take to earn your food, the more liberal she will be in distributing of the same, otherwise (she saith) that you shall fast with bread and water. Which determinate sentence she hath decreed not to be infringed and broken for any kind of suit or entreaty that you be able to make.' " When the maiden had spoken these words, she shut the little door, and returned to her lady ; the baron which thought that he had been come to a marriage, did eat nothing all the morning before, because he thought to be entertained with better and daintier store of viands, who now at those news fared like one out of his wits, and stood still so amazed, as though his legs would have failed him, and in one moment his spirits began to vanish and his force and breath forsook him, and fell down upon the chamber floor, in such wise as he that had beheld him would have thought him rather dead than living. In this state

he was a great time, and afterwards somewhat coming to himself, he could not tell whether he dreamed, or else that the words were true, which the maiden had said unto him : In the end seeing, and being verily assured, that he was in a prison so sure as bird in cage, through disdain and rage was like to die or else to lose his wits, faring with himself of long time like a madman, and not knowing what to do, passed the rest of the day in walking up and down the chamber, raving, stamping, staring, cursing and using words of greatest villainy, lamenting and bewailing the time and day, that so like a beast and brutish man, he gave the attempt to despoil the honesty of another man's wife. Then came to his mind the loss of all his lands and goods, which by the king's authority were put in compromise, then the shame, the scorn, and rebuke which he should receive at other men's hands, beyond measure vexed him : and report bruited in the court (for that it was impossible but the whole world should know it) so grieved him, as his heart seemed to be strained with two sharp and biting nails : the pains whereof, forced him to lose his wits and understanding. In the midst of which pangs furiously vaunting up and down the chamber, he espied by chance in a corner, a distaff furnished with good store of flax, and a spindle hanging thereupon : and overcome with choler and rage, he was about to spoil and break the same in pieces : but remembering what a hard weapon necessity is, he stayed his wisdom, and albeit he had rather to have contrived his leisure in noble and gentlemanlike pastime, yet rather than he would be idle, he thought to reserve that instrument to avoid

the tedious lack of honest and familiar company. When supper time was come, the maiden returned again, who opening the portal door, saluted the baron and said : “ My lord, my mistress hath sent me to visit your good lordship, and to receive at your good hands the effect of your labour, who hopeth that you have spun some substantial store of thread for earning of your supper, which being done, shall be readily brought unto you.” The baron full of rage, fury and felonious mood, if before he were fallen into choler, now by protestation of these words, seemed to transgress the bounds of reason, and began to rail at the poor wench, scolding and chiding her like a strumpet of the stews, faring as though he would have beaten her, or done her some other mischief : but his mood was stayed from doing any hurt. The poor wench lessoned by her mistress, in laughing wise said unto him : “ Why (my lord) do you chafe and rage against me ? Methinks, you do me wrong to use such reproachful words, which am but a servant, and bound to the commandment of my mistress : Why sir, do you not know that a pursuivant or messenger suffereth no pain or blame ? The greatest king or emperor of the world, receiving defiance from a meaner prince, never abuseth his ambassador with scolding words, ne yet by villainy or rebuke abuseth his person. Is it wisdom then for you, being a present prisoner, at the mercy of your keepers, in this dishonourable sort to revile me with disordered talk ? But sir, leave off your rages, and quiet yourself for this present time, for my mistress marvelleth much why you durst come (for all your noble state) to give attempts to violate her good

name, which message she required me to tell you, over and besides a desire she hath to know whether by the science of spinning, you have gained your meat, for you seem to kick against the wind, and beat water in a mortar, if you think from hence to go before you have earned a recompense for the meat which shall be given you. Wherefore it is your lot patiently to suffer the penance of your fond attempt, which I pray you gently to sustain, and think no scorn thereof hardly, for desperate men and hard adventures must needs suffer the dangers thereunto belonging. This is the determinate sentence of my mistress's mind, who affordeth you no better fare than bread and water, if you cannot show some pretty spindle full of yarn for sign of your good will at this present pinch of your distress." The maiden seeing that he was not disposed to show some part of willing mind to gain his living by that prefixed science shut the portal door, and went her way. The unhappy baron (arrived thither in very ill time) that night had neither bread nor broth, and therefore he fared according to the proverb : He that goeth to bed supperless, lieth in his bed restless, for during the whole night, no sleep could fasten his eyes. Now as this baron was closed in prison fast, so the lady took order, that secretly with great cheer his servants should be entertained and his horse with sweet hay and good provender well maintained, all his furnitures, sumpter horse and carriages conveyed within the castle, where wanted nothing for the state of such a personage but only liberty, making the host of the inn believe (where the lord harboured before) that he was returned into Hungary. But

now turn we to the Bohemian knight, who knowing that one of the two Hungarian competitors, were departed the court and ridden into Bohemia, did still behold the quality of the enchanted image, wherein by the space of three or four days, in which time, the baron made his greatest suit to his lady : he marked a certain alteration of colour in the same, but afterwards returned to his native form : and seeing no greater transformation, he was well assured, that the Hungarian baron was repulsed, and employed his labour in vain. Whereof the Bohemian knight was exceedingly pleased and contented, because he was well assured, that his wife had kept herself right pure and honest. Notwithstanding, his mind was not well settled, ne yet his heart at rest, doubting that the Lord Vladislao, which as yet was not departed the court, would obtain the thing, and acquit the fault, which his companion had committed. The imprisoned baron which all this time had neither eaten nor drunken, nor in the night could sleep, in the morning after he had considered his misadventure, and well perceived no remedy for him to go forth, except he obeyed the lady's hest, made of necessity a virtue, and applied himself to learn to spin by force, which freedom and honour could never have made him to do. Whereupon he took the distaff and began to spin. And albeit that he never spun in all his life before, yet instructed by necessity, so well as he could he drew out his thread, now small and then great, and many times of the meanest sort, but very often broad, ill favoured, ill closed and worse twisted, all out of form and fashion, that sundry times very heartily he laughed to himself, to see his cunning,

but would have made a cunning woman spinner burst into ten thousand laughters, if she had been there. Thus all the morning he spent in spinning, and when dinner came, his accustomed messenger, the maiden, repaired unto him again, and opening the window demanded of the baron how his work went forward, and whether he were disposed to manifest the cause of his coming into Bohemia ? He well beaten in the school of shame, uttered unto the maid the whole compact and bargain made between him and his companion, and the Bohemian knight her master, and afterwards showed unto her his spindle full of thread. The young wench, smiling at his work said : “ By Saint Mary, this is well done, you are worthy of victual for your hire : for now I well perceive that hunger forceth the wolf out of her den. I conne you thank, that like a lord you can so puissantly gain your living. Wherefore proceeding in that which you have begun, I doubt not but shortly you will prove such a workman, as my mistress shall not need to put out her flax to spin (to her great charge and cost) for making of her smocks, but that the same may well be done within her own house, yea although the same do serve but for kitchen cloths, for dresser boards, or cleaning of her vessel before they be served forth. And as your good deserts do merit thanks for this your art, now well begun, even so your new-told tale of coming hither, requireth no less, for that you have disclosed the truth.” When she had spoken these words, she reached him some store of meats for his dinner, and bade him farewell. When she was returned unto her lady, she showed unto her the spindle full of thread, and told her

therewithal the whole story of the compact between the knight Ulrico, and the two Hungarian barons. Whereof the lady sore astonished, for the snares laid to entrap her, was notwithstanding well contented, for that she had so well foreseen the same: but most of all rejoiced, that her husband had so good opinion of her honest life. And before she would advertise him of those events, she purposed to attend the coming of the Lord Vladislao, to whom she meant to do like penance for his careless bargain and dishonest opinion, accordingly as he deserved, marvelling very much that both the barons, were so rash and presumptuous, dangerously (not knowing what kind of woman she was) to put their lands and goods in hazard. But considering the nature of divers brainsick men, which pass not how carelessly they adventure their gained goods and inherited lands, so they may achieve the prey, after which they vainly hunt, for the prejudice and hurt of other, she made no account of these attempts, sith honest matrons force not upon the suits, or vain consumed time of light-brained coxcombs, that care not what fond cost or ill-employed hours they waste to annoy the good renown and honest bruits of women. But not to discourse from point to point the particulars of this intended journey, this poor deceived baron in short time proved a very good spinner, by exercise whereof, he felt such solace, as not only the same was a comfortable sport for his captive time, but also for want of better recreation, it seemed so joyful, as if he had been pluming and feeding his hawk, or doing other sports belonging to the honourable estate of a lord. Which his well-attrived labour, the maiden

recompensed with abundance of good and delicate meats. And although the lady was many times required to visit the baron, yet she would never to that request consent. In which time the knight Ulrico ceased not continually to view and review the state of his image, which appeared still to be one of well-coloured sort, and although this use of his was divers times marked and seen of many, yet being earnestly demanded the cause thereof, he would never disclose the same. Many conjectures thereof were made, but none could attain the truth. And who would have thought that a knight so wise and prudent had worn within his purse any enchanted thing? And albeit the king and queen had intelligence of this frequent practice of the knight, yet they thought not meet for the private and secret mystery, to demand the cause. One month and a half was passed now that the Lord Alberto was departed the court, and become a castle knight and cunning spinster: which made the Lord Vladislao to muse, for that the promise made between them was broken, and heard neither by letter or messenger what success he had received. After divers thoughts imagined in his mind, he conceived that his companion had happily enjoyed the end of his desired joy, and had gathered the wished fruits of the lady, and drowned in the main sea of his own pleasures, was overwhelmed in the bottom of oblivion: wherefore he determined to set forward on his journey to give onset of his desired fortune: who without long delay for execution of his purpose, prepared all necessaries for that voyage, and mounted on horseback with two of his men, he journeyed towards

Bohemia, and within a few days after arrived at the castle of the fair and most honest lady. And when he was entered the inn where the Lord Alberto was first lodged, he diligently enquired of him, and heard tell that he was returned into Hungary many days before, whereof much marvelling, could not tell what to say or think. In the end purposing to put in proof the cause wherefore he was departed out of Hungary, after diligent search of the manners of the lady, he understood by general voice, that she was without comparison, the honestest, wisest, gentlest and comeliest lady within the whole country of Bohemia. Incontinently the lady was advertised of the arrival of this baron, and knowing his message, she determined to pay him also with that money which she had already coined for the other. The next day the baron went unto the castle, and knocking at the gate, sent in word how that he was come from the court of King Mathie, to visit and salute the lady of that castle: and as she did entertain the first baron in courteous guise, and with loving countenance, even so she did the second, who thought thereby that he had attained by that pleasant entertainment the game which he hunted. And discoursing upon divers matters, the lady showed herself a pleasant and familiar gentlewoman, which made the baron to think that in short time he should win the prize for which he came. Notwithstanding at the first brunt he would not by any means descend to any particularity of his purpose, but his words ran general, which were, that hearing tell of the fame of her beauty, good grace and comeliness, by having occasion to repair into Bohemia to do certain his

affairs, he thought it labour well spent to ride some portion of his journey, though it were besides the way, to digress to do reverence unto her, whom fame advanced above the skies : and thus passing his first visitation he returned again to his lodging. The lady when the baron was gone from her castle, was rapt into a rage, greatly offended that those two Hungarian lords so presumptuously had banded themselves like common thieves to wander and rove the countries, not only to rob and spoil her of her honour, but also to bring her in displeasure of her husband, and thereby into the danger and peril of death. By reason of which rage (not without cause conceived) she caused another chamber to be made ready, next wall to the other baron that was become such a notable spinster, and upon the next return of the Lord Vladislao, she received him with no less good entertainment than before, and when night came, caused him to be lodged in her own house in the chamber prepared as before, where he slept not very soundly all that night, through the continued remembrance of his lady's beauty. Next morning he perceived himself to be locked fast in a prison. And when he had made him ready, thinking to descend to bid the lady good Morrow, seeking means to unlock the door, and perceiving that he could not, he stood still in a dump. And as he was thus standing, marvelling the cause of his shutting in so fast, the maiden repaired to the hole of the door, giving his honour an unaccustomed salutation, which was that her mistress commanded her to give him to understand, that if he had any lust or appetite to his breakfast, or if he minded from thenceforth to ease

his hunger or contain life, that he should give himself to learn to reel yarn. And for that purpose she willed him to look in such a corner of the chamber, and he should find certain spindles of thread, and an instrument to wind his yarn upon. "Wherefore," (quoth she) "apply yourself thereunto, and lose no time. He that had that time beholding the baron in the face, would have thought that he had seen rather a marble stone, than the figure of a man. But converting his cold conceived mood, into mad anger, he fell into ten times more displeasure with himself, than is before described by the other baron. But seeing that his mad behaviour, and beastly usage was bestowed in vain, the next day he began to reel. The lady afterwards when she had intelligence of the good, and gainful spinning of the Lord Alberto, and the well-disposed and towardly reeling of the Lord Vladislao, greatly rejoiced for making of such two notable workmen, whose workmanship exceeded the labours of them that had been apprentices to the occupation seven years together. Such be the apt and ready wits of the soldiers of love: wherein I would wish all Cupid's darlings to be nuzzled and applied in their youthful time: then no doubt their passions would appease, and rages assuage, and would give over bold attempts, for which they have no thank of the chaste and honest. And to this goodly sight the lady brought the servants of these noblemen, willing them to mark and behold the diligence of their masters, and to imitate the industry of their gallant exercise, who never attained meat before by labour they had gained the same. Which done, she made them take their horse, and furnitures of their

lords, and to depart: otherwise if by violence they resisted, she would cause their choler to be calmed with suchlike service as they saw their lords do before their eyes. The servants seeing no remedy, but must needs depart, took their leave. Afterwards she sent one of her servants in post to the court, to advertise her husband of all that which chanced. The Bohemian knight receiving these good news, declared the same unto the king and queen, and recited the whole story of the two Hungarian barons, accordingly as the tenor of his wife's letters did purport. The princes stood still in great admiration, and highly commended the wisdom of the lady, esteeming her for a very sage and politic woman. Afterwards the knight Ulrico humbly besought the king for execution of his decree and performance of the bargain. Whereupon the king assembled his council and required every of them to say their mind. Upon the deliberation whereof, the Lord Chancellor of the kingdom, with two counsellors were sent to the castle of the Bohemian knight, to enquire and learn the process and doings of the two lords, who diligently accomplished the king's commandment. And having examined the lady and her maiden with other of the house, and the barons also, whom a little before the arrival of these commissioners, the lady had caused to be put together, that by spinning and reeling they might comfort one another. When the Lord Chancellor had framed and digested in order the whole discourse of this history, returned to the court where the king and queen, with the peers and noblemen of his kingdom, caused the acts of the same to be divulged and bruited abroad, and

after much talk and discourse of the performance of this compact, pro and contra, the queen taking the lady's part, and favouring the knight, the king gave sentence that Sir Ulrico should wholly possess the lands and goods of the two barons, to him and to his heirs for ever, and that the barons should be banished the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia, never to return upon pain of death. This sentence was put in execution and the unfortunate barons exiled, which specially to those that were of their consanguinity and blood, seemed too severe and rigorous. Nevertheless the covenant being most plain and evident to most men, the same seemed to be pronounced with great justice and equity, for example in time to come, to lesson rash wits how they judge and deem so indifferently of women's behaviours, amongst whom no doubt there be both good and bad as there be of men. Afterwards the two princes sent for the lady to the court, who there was courteously entertained, and for this her wise and politic fact had in great admiration. The queen then appointed her to be one of her women of honour, and esteemed her very dearly. The knight also daily grew to great promotion well beloved and favoured of the king, who with his lady long time lived in great joy and felicity, not forgetting the cunning Pollaco, that made him the image and likeness of his wife : whose friendship and labour he rewarded with money, and other benefits very liberally.

ANSALDO AND DIANORA

Mistress Dianora demanded of Master Ansaldo a garden so fair in January as in the month of May. Master Ansaldo (by means of an obligation which he made to a necromancer) caused the same to be done. The husband agreed with the gentlewoman that she should do the pleasure which Master Ansaldo required, who hearing the liberality of the husband, acquitted her of her promise, and the necromancer discharged Master Ansaldo.

Of all things commonly accompanying the manner and trade of man's life, nothing is more circumspectly to be attended and provided for, than regard and estimation of honesty : which attire, as it is most excellent, and comely, so above all other vain toys of outward apparel to be preferred : and as honesty hath all other good conditions included in itself, as the same by any means cannot stray out of that tract, trodden before by the steps of that most excellent virtue : even so, impossible it is for the party adorned with the same, to wander one jot from that fore-trodden path ; wherefore let each wight that traceth this wordly life, foresee the due observation of all things incident to that which is honest. Nothing in this life (saith Tully in his oration, for the poet Archias) is so much to be regarded. Honesty, for the getting whereof all torments of body, all perils and dangers of death be not to be regarded : honesty then being a treasure so precious, what care not only

for the achieving but for the conservation ought to be employed? in the practice whereof, one special thing ought to be attended, which is how a vow or promise ought to be made, or how the estimation of honesty ought to be hazarded for any thing seem it never so impossible: for what is it that love and money hath not brought to pass? what hard adventures by Jason, what sleight by Alexander the son of King Priamus? what monsters slain and labours sustained by Hercules? what dangers and exploits some have incurred and other attempted by divers? to be short,

Nihil est quod non effreno captus amore, ausit.
As Ovid the poet saith:

Nothing there is, but that the loving man
doth dare,

Surprised with frantic fit, each deed he doth not
spare.

Wherefore let every wight beware how they gage
their honesty for any enterprise (seem it never so
impossible). Mistress Dianora dearly beloved of a
gentleman, and earnestly assailed, in the end yielded
upon a condition: which if it could be brought to
pass (which she thought impossible) was content to
surrender to his love: who consulting with a
magician, performed her request: then what fol-
lowed, and what counsel her husband gave her, after
she had broken the effect of her promise to him,
and what courtesy was used on all sides, the sequel
hereof discloseth. The country of Frioli although
it be cold, yet is it pleasant by reason of many fair
mountains, rivers, and clear springs that are in the

same : where there is a city called Udina, and in the same sometime dwelling a fair gentlewoman called Mistress Dianora, the wife of Gilberto, a notable rich man, a very courteous personage, and of good behaviour. This lady, for her graces and virtues was entirely beloved of a gentleman and great lord, called Master Ansaldo Grandese, who for his liberality and valiance in arms, was famous and well known : and albeit that he loved her fervently, seeking all means possible to be beloved of her, soliciting her many times by ambassadors, yet his labour was in vain. And the lady being offended for his daily suit and travail, he for all her refusal and disagreement to his desire, would not abstain from loving her, but still maintain his importunate suit : she devising with herself how to rid him away, made a request unto him, so strange and impossible (in her judgment) as he was not able to bring the same to pass : and upon a day she said unto an old woman, (the which came oftentimes to sue unto her in his behalf) these words : “ Good wife, thou hast many times assured me, that Master Ansaldo doth love me above all other, and thou hast offered unto me marvellous gifts and presents in his name : all which I have refused upon consideration, that I mind not to favour or love him for his goods : but if thou canst justify by warrantise, or other probable argument that he loveth me so much as thou sayest, I will descend without fail to love him again and to do the thing that it shall please him to command me : therefore if he will assure me to do that thing which I shall require him to do, tell him that I am at his commandment.” “ What is that Madam,” said the old

woman, “that you desire?” “The thing which I demand,” answered the gentlewoman, “is, that he should cause to be made here without the city, during the month of January next coming, a garden full of green herbs, flowers and trees, bespread with leaves, even as it were in the month of May: and if so be that he do it not, then let him never send thee or any other unto me again: for if afterwards he be importunate upon me, like as I have hitherto kept it close from my husband and parents, even so complaining unto them, I will assay to be dispatched from his long and tedious suit.” When the knight understood that request, and the offer that his mistress made him (although it seemed a thing very difficult and almost impossible to be done) knowing very well that she did the same for none other purpose, but only to put him out of hope that ever he should enjoy her, he determined notwithstanding, to prove what he was able to do. And for that purpose sent to seek in many places of the world if there were any man that could assist him and give him counsel therein. In the end there was one found that offered to do it (if he were well waged thereunto) by the art of necromancy, with whom Master Ansaldo bargained for a great sum of money. Then he expected the month of January with great devotion, which being come, even when the coldest weather was, and that all places were full of snow and ice, this necromancer used his art in such sort, as in the night after the holy days of Christmas, in a fair meadow adjoining to the city, there appeared in the morning, as they can testify that saw the same, one of the fairest gardens that ever any man saw, full of

herbs, trees, and fruits of all sorts : which when Master Ansaldo had seen, God knoweth if he were glad or not : and incontinently caused to be gathered the fairest fruits and flowers that were there, and secretly sent the same to his friend, inviting her to come and see the garden which she had procured him to make, to the intent thereby she might know the love that he bare her, and to remember the promise which she made him, and confirmed by oath, that he might from that time forth esteem her a woman so good as her promise. When the gentlewoman saw the flowers and fruits and hearing tell by report of the strange things that were in that garden, began to repent herself of the promise which she had made : but for all her repentance, she like one desirous to see strange things, went with many other women to see the same : and having praised it, not without great admiration, she returned home, the angriest woman that ever was, when she had considered in what sort she had abused herself by means of that garden : and her rage was so great, that she could by no means keep the same so secret or close, but that her husband must perceive the same, who would needs know of her all the whole matter : the gentlewoman a long time kept it secret : in the end she was constrained to declare unto him the same in order. Her husband hearing what she had promised was suddenly very angry : afterwards considering the pure intent of his wife, he wisely appeased her, and said : “ Dianora, it is not the act of a wise and virtuous wife to incline her ear to such messages as those be, and less honest to make any mart or bargain of her honesty with any person, under what

condition so ever it be. Words which the heart receiveth by the ears, have greater force than many do esteem, and there is nothing so difficult, but by the amorous is brought to pass. First therefore thou hast done evil to give ear unto such ambassage, and afterwards for agreement to the bargain : for the weight of chastity is so ponderous, as by no means it ought to be laid in balance, either by impossibilities to boast and brag thereof, or else by assurance of their conceived thought to bring it into question, lest in all places the same may be disputed upon, and blemish with the note of lightness the person till that time unspotted : but because I know the purity of thy heart, I will agree unto thee for discharge of thy promise, which peradventure, some other would not do, moved thereunto for the fear I have of the necromancer, who if he see Master Ansaldo to be offended because thou hast deluded him, may do us some displeasure : wherefore I will that thou go to Master Ansaldo, and if thou canst by any means to use thyself (as thine honour saved) thou mayest discharge thy promise, I shall commend thy wit : but if there be no remedy otherwise, for that only time then lend forth thy body and not thy will." The gentlewoman hearing her husband so wisely speak, could do nought else but weep, and said that she would not agree to his request. Notwithstanding it pleased the husband, for all the denial which his wife did make, that it should be so : by means whereof, the next morning upon the point of day the gentlewoman in the homeliest attire she had, with two of her servants before, and her maid behind, went to the lodging of Master Ansaldo, who when

he heard tell that his lover was come to see him, marvelled much, and rising up, called the necromancer, and said unto him : “ My will is that thou see how much thine art hath prevailed : ” and going unto her, without any disordinate lust, he saluted her with reverence and honestly received her. Then they entered into a fair chamber, and sitting down before a great fire, he said unto her these words : “ Madam, I humbly beseech you, if the love which I have borne you of long time, and yet do bear, deserve some recompense, that it please you to tell me unfeignedly the cause which have made you to come hither thus early, and with such a company.” The shamefast gentlewoman, her eyes full of tears, made answer : “ Sir, the love which I bear you, nor any promised faith have brought me hither, but rather the only commandment of my husband, who hath greater respect to the pain and travail of your disordinate love, than to his own honour or my reputation, who hath caused me to come hither, and by his commandment am ready for this once to satisfy your pleasure.” If Master Ansaldo were abashed at the beginning, he much more did marvel when he heard the gentlewoman thus to speak, and moved with the liberality of her husband, he began to change his heat into compassion, and said : “ Mistress, God defend if it be true that you do say, that I should soil the honour of him, which hath pity upon my love, and therefore you may tarry here so long as it shall please you, with such assurance of your honesty as if you were my natural sister, and frankly may depart when you be disposed, upon such condition, that you render in my behalf those thanks unto your husband

which you shall think convenient, for the great liberality which he hath employed upon me, deeming myself henceforth so much bound unto him as if I were his brother or servant." The gentlewoman hearing those words, the best contented that ever was, said unto him : " All the world could never make me believe, your great honesty considered, that other thing could happen unto me by my coming hither, than that which presently I see : for which I reckon myself perpetually bound unto you." And taking her leave, honourably returned in the aforesaid company home to her husband, and told him what had chanced, which engendered perfect love and amity between him and Master Ansaldo. The necromancer to whom Master Ansaldo determined to give the price, covenanted between them, seeing the liberality which the husband had used towards Master Ansaldo, and the like of Master Ansaldo towards the gentlewoman, said : " God defend, that sith I have seen the husband liberal of his honour, and you bountiful of your love and courtesy, but that I be likewise frank in my reward : for knowing that it is well employed of you, I purpose that you shall keep it still." The knight was ashamed, and would have forced him to take the whole, or part : but in offering the same, he lost his labour : and the necromancer the third day after, having undone his garden, and desirous to depart, took his leave. Thus Ansaldo extinguishing the dishonest love kindled in his heart, for enjoying of his lady, upon consideration of honest charity, and regard of courtesy, repressed his wanton mind, and abstained from that which God grant that others by like example may refrain.

ALEXANDER DE MEDICI AND THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER

The gentle and just act of Alexander de Medices, Duke of Florence, upon a gentleman whom he favoured, who having ravished the daughter of a poor miller, caused him to marry her, for the greater honour and celebration whereof, he appointed her a rich and honourable dowry.

IF the force of virtue were apparent at the sight of eye, it would be deemed to be of less value than the greatness thereof deserveth (for sundry causes rising in the minds of men) and that by performing the little which rested for the entire perfection of her whole united glory. Now because that her effects be diverse, and that diversely they be used, the examples also of such diversity, do variate and make diverse the affections of men: some to follow that quality and other that part, proceeding from the whole and perfect body of virtue, which hath caused some to win the prize of modesty and temperance in their deeds, other full of magnanimity (not familiar to many) have resisted the assaults of fortune. Many other have embraced that only honour which is the nurse of each good act, whereby they have either well ruled the state of free cities, or guided the armies of mighty monarchs. And such whilom the cities of Rome, Athens, Sparta, and the ancient monarchs of the Medes, Persians, and the Assyrians did see.

I will omit a good company of the sage and wise, which have appeased the troubles of cities, the inquietations of palaces, the cries of judgment seats, the dissimulation and deceitful flatteries of courts, the careful griefs which the householder by government of his house and family doth sustain and feel, of purpose more frankly to retire to the study of sapience, which alone is able to make a man happy, and worthy to be partaker of the divinity. But above all, I will praise him which not subject to the law liveth nevertheless like him that is most thrall thereunto, or without respect of blood or friendship shall exercise justice upon his dearest and best beloved : as in old time Manlius and Torquatus at Rome, the people of Athens towards one Timagoras, who beyond the duty of the Ambassador of a frank city, fell down on his knees and worshipped the Persian king. And in our time the Marquis of Ferrara, by doing to death his own son for adultery committed with his mother-in-law. And yet justice may savour of some cruelty, which rather turneth to shame than praise : as John Maria Visconti Duke of Milan, when he caused a covetous priest to be buried quick with the corpse of him whom he had refused to bury without money, the history whereof is hereafter remembered. So as mediocrity of punishment ought to be yoked with the rigour of law, for the mitigation thereof. And behold, wherefore the great Dictator Julius Cæsar loved better to gain the heart of his enemies with mercy, than vanquish and bring them to obedience with massy manacles and gyves of iron. Moreover in our age Alphonsus of Aragon (the true sampler of a just and righteous prince) did not he

esteem (when he straitly besieged Gaiette) the victory to be more glorious and better gotten, which is done by composition and gentleness, than the bloody conquest, coloured with tears and blood of a poor simple people? And truly princes, and great lords, specially they which newly (without succession received from their ancestors) arrive to the government of some commonwealth, ought continually to have before their eyes, an honest severity for the holiness of the law, and a grave mildness, to moderate the rigour of their duty: for by that means right is maintained, the heart of man is won, so well as by violence: and the state of government taketh so good footing, as the wind of no sedition afterwards can remove the same, being founded upon a sure stone, and framed upon a rock durable for a long time. Whereof we have an example of fresh memory of a kind act, full both of wisdom and of gentle severity, in a prince of our time, who without effusion of blood punished with rigour enough, a trespass committed, and sweetly remitted the pain upon him, which merited grievous, nay mortal punishment, as at large you shall see by the discourse that followeth. Alexander de Medices, favoured by the Church of Rome, (and armed with the Papal standard) was he that first with great activity and wisdom inveyed the Seigniory of Florence, immediately usurping the name, title, and prerogative of Duke. The same albeit upon the prime face he was odious to the people of Florence, wroth for losing of their ancient liberty, and unpleasant to the Senators and potentates, to see themselves deprived of the sovereignty of Justice, and of the authority they had to command over all

the citizens, yet for all that was he endued with so good qualities, and governed so well his principality, as that which at the beginning was termed tyranny, was received as just domination, and that which was supposed to be abused by force, seemed to be done as it were by lawful succession. And they counted themselves happy (when they saw their luck to be such as their commonwealth must needs obey the advice and pleasure of one prince alone) to have a sovereign lord so wise, so virtuous and so full of courtesy: and albeit in all other things he showed himself praiseworthy, noble, and of gentle kind, yet in this he vanquished himself in himself, by that indifferent justice, which made him wonderful, denying the same to none, and in no one jot showed himself partial to any, which thought by him to be supported in their follies: and that which is more to be wondered in him, and doth augment the praise of his integrity in judgment, was, that he punished in another the thing, which he ought to have pardoned and remitted, he himself being attainted with that disease. But this good Duke applied to reason, to time, and to the gravity of the fact and quality of the offended persons: for where the greatness of a deed surpasseth all occasion of pardon and mercy, there the prince, judge, or magistrate ought to despoil and put off his sweetest affections, to apparel himself with rigour, which reacheth the knife into the hand of the ruler, of purpose that private familiarity, do not in end raise in the subject's heart a contempt of superiors, and unbridled licence, lawless to live at their pleasure. Now the thing which I mean to tell, consisteth in the proof of a rare and exquisite prince,

which seldom or never harboureth in young age, the heats whereof cannot but with great difficulty, feel the coldness and correction of reason: and likewise the causes from whence wisdom's force proceed, do rest in long experience of things, whereby men wax old in ripeness of wit, and their deeds become worthy of praise. This Duke Alexander ordered so well his estates, and kept such a goodly and plentiful court, as the same gave place to no prince of Italy, how great or rich so ever it was, which noble court he kept as well for his own guard and honour as to show the natural stoutness of his courage, not using for all that any insolency or unseemly dealing against the heinous and ancient enemies of his family. Amongst his gallant troop of courtiers, which ordinarily attended, there was a Florentine gentleman, very near the Duke, and the best beloved of them all. This young gentleman had a manor hard by Florence, where he was very well and stately lodged, which caused him many times to forsake the city, with two of his companions, to recreate himself in that pleasant place. It chanced upon a time, he being in his fieldish house, besides the which there was a mill, the master of the said mill had a passing fair daughter, whom this gentleman did well mark and behold, and with her beauty became strangely in love, in whom also appeared some noble port, that exceeded the blood and race whereof she came. But what? The heavens be not too spare distributers of their gifts, but sometimes they divide them with the least measure, and at some other times in equal weight or greatest heap, to them that be of the basest sort and popular degree, so well, as to the greatest

and of most noble race. Rome sometimes hath seen a bondman and slave, sometimes a runagate's son, for his wit and courage to bear the sceptre in his hand, and to decide the causes of that lofty people, who by sleights and practices aspired the empire of the whole world. And he that within our fathers' remembrance desireth to know what great Tambur-lane of Tartary was, the astonishment and ruin of all the east parts, shall well perceive that his original sorted from the vulgar sort, and from the lowest degree that was amongst all estates : whereby must be confessed, that the goodness of nature is such and so great, as she will help her nurse-children (whatsoever they be,) the best she can : not that I mean to infer hereby, but that the blood of predecessors, with the institution of their posterity, much augmenteth the force of the spirit, and accomplisheth that more sincerely whereunto nature hath given a beginning. Now to come to our purpose, this young courtier, taken and chained in the bands of love, fettered and clogged with the beauty and good grace of that country wench, forethought the means how he might enjoy the thing after which he hoped. To love her he deemed it unworthy of his degree : and yet he knew her to be such (by report of many) as had a very good wit, tongue at will, and which is more esteemed, a paragon and mirror of chaste life and modesty. Which tormented this amorous monsieur beyond measure, and yet changed not his affection, assuring himself that at length he should attain the end of his desires, and glut that his insatiable hunger, which pressed him from day to day to gather the sweet and savory fruit which lovers

so eagerly sue for at maidens' hands of semblable age, who then was between xvi and xvii years. This lover did to understand to his companions his grief and frenzy, who sorry for the same, assayed by all means, to make him forget it, telling him that it was unseemly for a gentleman of his account, to make himself a fable to the people, which would come to pass if they knew how indiscreetly he had placed his love: and that there were a number of fair and honest gentlewomen more to whom besides conveniently and with greater contention he might address the same. But he which much less saw, than blind love himself that was his guide, and he that was more bare of reason and advice than the poets feign Cupid to be naked of apparel, would not hearken to the good counsel, which his companions gave him, but rather said that it was lost time for them to use such speech, for he had rather die, and endure all the mocks and scoffs of the world, than lose the most delicate prey (in his mind,) that could chance into the hands of man, adding moreover, that the homeliness and rudeness of the country, had not so much annoyed his new beloved, but she deserved for her beauty to be compared with the greatest minion and finest attired gentlewoman of the city: for this maiden had but the ornament and minionness which nature had enlarged, where other artificially force by trumperies, to usurp that which the heavens deny them. "Touching her virtue let that pass in silence, sithence that she" (quod he sighing) "is too chaste and virtuous for one whom I would choose to dally withal: my desire is not to make her a Lucrece, or some of those ancient matrons, which

in elder years builded the temple of Woman's Fortune at Rome." The companions of this lover seeing how he was bent, promised him what they were able to do, for accomplishment of his will, for the which he thanked them very heartily, offering like duty, where fortune should prepare the proof of their affection and need of his amorous service: in the meantime, conceiving in his mind some new device, which so soon as he had found out was not able to be brought to pass, and knowing that the Duke seldom would have him out of his sight, began to invent lies, doing him to understand that he had necessary occasion, for a certain time, to remain and be at his country house. The Duke which loved him, and who thought that either he had some secret sickness, or else some wench which he was loth to discover before his companions, gave him leave for a month, which so pleased this amorous gentleman, as he leapt for joy, and was not able to rest one hour, before he had found out his friends and companions, to mount on horseback to visit her that had under her power and obeisance the best portion of him, which was his heart and his most secret thought. When he was come to his country house, he began to stalk abroad, and dance around about the mill, where his beloved did dwell, who was not so foolish, but by and by suspected whereunto those goings and comings of the pilgrim tended, and for what prey he led his dogs in lease, and caused so many nets and cords to be displayed by hunters of every age and sex, who to discover the country, assayed by beating the bushes, to take the beast at form: for which cause she also for her part, began to fly the snares of those birders, and the rang-

ing of the dogs that vented after her, straying not from the house of the good man her father : whereof this poor lover conceived great despair, not knowing by what means he might rouse the game after which he hunted, ne find the means to do her understand his plaints and unmeasured grief of heart, the firm love, and sincere mind wherewith he was so earnestly bent, both to obey and love her above all other : and that which most of all increased his pain, was that of so great a troop of messages which he had sent, with gifts and promises the better to achieve his purpose, no one was able to take place or force (never so little) the chastity of that sober and modest maid. It chanced one day as this gentleman was walking along a wood-side newly felled, hard adjoining to his house, by which there was a clear and goodly fountain shadowed between two thick and lofty maple trees, the miller's daughter went thither for water, and as she had set down her pails upon the fountain brink, her lover came unto her, little thinking of such a joyful meeting, which he well declared by these words : “ Praised be God, that when I hoped least of this good hap, He hath sent me hither, to see the only substance of my joy.” Then turning his face towards the maiden, said unto her : “ Is it true that thou art here (or do I dream) and so near to him that most desireth to gratify thee in anything wherewith it may please thee to command him ? Wilt thou not have pity upon the pains and griefs which continually I endure for the extreme love I bear thee ? ” And saying so, he would have embraced her. But the maid, which cared no more for his flatteries, than before she did for his presents and messages seeing

the same to tend to nothing else but to her ruin and great dishonour, with stout countenance, and by her lively colour declaring the chaste and virtuous motion of her blood, said to this valiant gentleman : “ How now, sir, do you think that the vileness of mine apparel, holdeth less virtue, than is under the rich and sumptuous ornaments of greatest ladies ? Do you suppose that my bringing-up hath bred in me such gross blood, as for your only pleasure, I should corrupt the perfection of my mind, and blot the honour which hitherto so carefully I have kept and religiously preserved ? Be sure that sooner death shall separate the soul from my body, than willingly I would suffer the overthrow and violation of my virginity. It is not the part of such a gentleman as you be, thus to espy and subtly pursue us poor country maidens to charm us with your sleights and guileful talk : it is not the duty of a gentleman to suborn such vauntcouriers to discover and put in peril, the honour of chaste maidens and honest wives, as heretofore you have done to me. It ought to suffice, that you have received shame by repulse of your messengers, and not to come yourself to be partaker of their confusion.” “ And that is it, that ought to move you, sweet heart ” (answered he) “ to take pity upon my grief, so plainly seeing that unfeignedly I do love you, and that my love is so well planted, as rather had I suffer death, than occasion the least offence that may displease you : only I beseech you, not to show yourself so cruel unto him, who disdaining all other, hath made you so frank an offer both of himself and of all that he hath to command.” The maid not greatly trusting his words,

feared that he prolonged time to make her stay till his servants came to steal her away : and therefore without further answer, she taking up her pails, and half running till she came near the mill, escaped his hands, telling her father no part of that talk between them : who began already to doubt the treason, devised by the gentleman, against the pudicity of his daughter, unto whom he never disclosed his suspicion, were it that he knew her to be virtuous enough, and constant to resist the luring assaults of love, or considered the imbecility of our flesh, and the malice of the same, which daily aspireth things thereunto defended, and by laws limited and prescribed, which laws it ought not to exceed, and yet thereof it wisheth the abolition. The gentleman seeing that the maiden had forsaken him, and little esteemed his amorous onset, outraged for love, and chafed with choler, spake these words to himself : “ Ah, foolish and dastard lover, what didst thou mean when thou hadst her so near thee, in place so commodious, where she durst not gainsay thee that thou didst no better pursue her ? And what knowest thou if she came of purpose to ease thy pain and to finish thy troublesome travails ? Surely I suppose she did so, but that shame and duty forced her to use those words, to make me think, that lightly she would not be overcome by persuasions : and put the case that it were not so, who could have let me to take by force that, whereunto willingly she would not accord : but what is she to be revenged of such an injury ? She is for conclusion the daughter of a miller, and may make her vaunt, that she hath mocked a gentleman, who being alone with her, and burning with love,

durst not staunch his thirst (although full dry) so near the fountain: and by God (said he rising from a green bank near the fountain's side) if I die therefore, I will have it either by love or force." In this wicked and tyrannical mind, he returned to his place, where his companions seeing him so out of quiet, said unto him: "Is this the guise of a gentle mind, to abase itself to the pursuit of so simple a wench? Do not you know the malice of that sex, and the guiles wherewith those serpents poison men? Care you so little for a woman as she doth for you, and then will she embrace you and make much of you, whose only study is (which I believe) to frame herself against all that, for which humble suit is made: but admit, that women hath some qualities to draw men to love them, to honour and serve them, which if it so be truly that office and dutiful devoir ought to be employed in service of them, that be honourable and in spirit and judgment of gentle kind, which no doubt will countervail the merit of such a suitor: and certes I am of opinion that a man may vainly consume a year or two in pursuit and service of this mealy country wench, so well as address his love in the obedience of some fair and honest gentlewoman: which courteously and with some favour will recompense, the travails of her servant, where that rude and sottish girl, by pride will vaunt and look aloft, at the honour done unto her, despise them whose worthiness she knoweth not, and whom neither she nor the best of her seed, be worthy to serve in any respect: will you know then what I think best for you to do? Mine advice is then, that one of these evenings she be trussed up in a mail and

brought hither, or in some place else where you think good, that you may enjoy at pleasure the beauty of her whom you do praise and wonder at so much: and afterwards let her dissemble if she list, and make a jewel of her chastity when she hath not to triumph over you, by bearing away the victory of your pursuits." "Ah my good friend," answered the desperate lover, "how rightly you touch the most dangerous place of all my wound, and how sovereign a salve and plaster you apply thereunto: I had thought truly to entreat you of that, whereof even now you have made the overture, but fearing to offend you, or too much usurp upon your friendship, rather had I suffer a death continual, than raise one point of offence, or discontentation in them, which so frankly have offered to do me pleasure, whereof (by God's assistance) I hope to be acquitted with all duty and office of friendship. Now resteth it, to put in proof the effect of your device, and that so shortly as I can: in like manner you see that the term of my here abode, will shortly expire, and if we be once at the court, impossible it is for me to recover so good occasion, and peradventure she will be married, or some other shall carry away the prey after which I have beaten the bush." The plot then of this maiden's rape, was resolved upon, and the first espied occasion taken: but the lover which feared lest this heat of his companions would cool, solicited them so much, as the execution was ordained the following night: which they did, not so much for the pleasure of their friend, to whom in such adventures they ought to deny all help, (sith friendship ought not to pass, *sed usque ad aras*, as

Pericles the Athenian said, so far as was sufferable by the laws of God) as for that they were of nature of the self same tramp, which their passionate companion was, and would have made no conscience to enterprise the same for themselves, although the other had not told them his affections: these be the fruits of unruled youth, wherein only the verdure and greenness of the age beareth greatest sway, the will whereof reason cannot restrain, which sooner reclineth to the carnal part, than to that which tendeth to the honest repast and contentment of the mind. The next night, they three accompanied with v or vi servants (so honest as their masters) gave the onset in armour and weapons well appointed to defend and hurt, if any resistance were made, they might be able to repel their adversaries. Thus about two of the clock in the night they came to the mill, the heavens having thrown their mantle over the vaporous earth, and dimmed her face with their veil obscure and dark, and yet not such, but that the air was cloudy clear: and when no man doubted of so great offence, and of such unhappy rape, they brake into the poor miller's house, between whose arms they took away his daughter dear, and almost dead for fear, piteously began to cry for help, defending herself so well as she could from those thieves and murderers. The desolate father raging with no less fury than the Hyrcanian tiger, when her falcons be killed or taken away, ran first to one, and then to another, to stay them from carrying of her away, for whom they came. In the end the amorous ravisher of his daughter said unto him: "Father, father, I advise thee to get thee hence if

thou love thy life, for thy force is too weak to resist so many, the least of whom is able to cool this thy foolish heart and choler, for the which I would be sorry, for the great love I bear unto thy daughter, who (I hope) before she depart my company, shall have wherewith to be contented: and thou cause to pacify this thine immoderate rage, which in vain thou yelpest forth against this troop." "Ah false knave and thief," (said the honest poor man) "it is thou then, which by thine infamous filthiness and insatiable knavery, dost dishonour the commendable fame of my daughter, and by like means shortenest the hoped years of me her poor unhappy father, losing through thy wickedness, the staff and stay of mine old aged life? Thinkest thou traitor, that living till this day (for all my poverty) in reputation of an honest man, in mine old days will become an unshamefast and vile minister and chapman of my daughter's maidenhood and virginity? No, knave, think not that I forget the wrong received of thee, for which by some means or other, I will purchase just revenge upon thee or thine." The gentleman caring little or nothing for the old man's words, having in his hand his desired spoil, commanded his men to march before with the maiden, leaving behind the poor old man which thundered against them a thousand bitter curses, threatening and reviling them, by all the terms he could devise, desirous (as I think) to have them turn back to kill him. But thereunto they gave so little heed, as when he willed them to leave his daughter behind them: to whom the amorous courtier addressing himself, began to kiss her, and assayed by all means with pleasant words and many

sweet promises to comfort her : but the poor wench knowing full well, that they went about to play the butchers with her chastity, and to commit murder with the flower of her virginity, began to cry so piteously with dolorous voice, as she would have moved to compassion the hardest hearts that ever were, except the heart of him which craved nothing more than the spoil of that his sweetest enemy. When the poor wench saw her virtue ready to be spoiled by one, who (not in marriage joined) went about to violate and possess the same, and knew that afterwards he would vaunt himself for the victory of such a precious prize : " Alas (quod she) is it possible that the sovereign justice of God can abide a mischief so great and cursed, and that the voice of a poor wretched afflicted maid cannot be heard in the presence of the mighty Lord above ? Why may not I now rather suffer death, than the infamy which I see to wander before mine eyes ? O the good old man my dear and loving father, how far better had it been for thee to have slain me with thy dagger, between the hands of these most wicked thieves, than to let me go to be the prey of those my foes that seek the spoil of virtue, and the blot of thy reputation. O happy a hundred hundred times be ye, which have already passed the inevitable tract of death when ye were in cradle, and I poor unhappy wench no less blessed had I been if partaker of your joy, where now I rest alive to feel the smart and anguish of that death more eager to support, than that which divideth the body and soul." The gentleman offended with those complaints, began to threaten, that he would make her forget her disordered behaviour, saying that she

must change another tune, and that her plaints were to no purpose amongst them which cared not, nor yet were bent to stay upon her womanish tears, lamentations and cries. The poor maiden hearing their resolution, and seeing that she vainly dissparkled her voice into the air, began to hold her peace, which caused the lover to speak unto her these words : “And what my wench ? Dost thou think it strange, that for the heat of love I bear to thee that I should force such violence ? Alas, it is not malice nor evil will that causeth me to do the same, it is love which cannot be enclosed, but must needs break forth to manifest his force. Ah, that thou hadst felt, what I do suffer and endure for love of thee. I believe then thou wouldest not be so hard hearted, but have pity upon the grief whereof thou shouldest have proved the vehemence.” Whereunto the maid answered nothing but tears and sighs, wringing her arms and hands, and sometimes making war upon her fair hair. But all these feminine wailings nothing moved this gallant, and less removed his former desire to have her, which he achieved in despite of her teeth, so soon as he arrived at his own house. The remnant of the night they lay together, where he used her with all such kind of flattering and loving speech, as a lover (of long time) a suitor could devise to do to her, whom at length he did possess. Now all these flattering follies tended only to make her his own, to keep her in his country house for his pleasure. She that for her age (as before is said) was of condition sage, and of gentle mind, began subtly to dissemble and feign to take pleasure in that which was to her more bitter than any aloes or

wood of myrrha, and more against her heart than remembrance of death, which still she wished for remedy of her grief, and voluntarily would have killed herself like a Lucrece, if the fear of God, and dreadful loss of body and soul, had not turned her mind, and also hoped in God that the ravisher should repair the fault which he committed, and bear the penance for his temerity, whereof she was no whit deceived, as ye shall perceive, by that which presently doth follow. Now whilst the ravisher took his pleasure with his rape, the miserable father made the air to sound with his complaints, accusing fortune for letting the whorish varlet so to pass, without doing him to feel the lustiness of his age, and the force that yet rested in his furrowed face, and corpse withered with length of years. In the end knowing that his plaints, curses, and desire were thrown forth in vain, perceiving also his force unequal to deal with such an enemy, and to get again by violence his stolen daughter, or to recover her by that means whereby she was taken away, he determined the next day to go and complain to the Duke: and upon that determination he laid him down to sleep under the trees, which joined to the fountain, where sometimes the courtier had communed with his daughter. And seeing that the element began to show some splendid hue interpaled with colours of white, yellow, and red, signs preceding the rising of fresh Aurora, started from his sleep and took his way to Florence, whither he came, upon the opening of the city gates. Then going to the palace of the Duke, he tarried until he saw the Prince go forth to service. The good man seeing him of whom he

attended to receive succour, favour, and justice, began to fret and rage for remembrance of his received wrong, and was ashamed to see himself in place not accustomed : and although it grieved his heart with hardy speech to presume in presence of so many, yet the just anger and desire of vengeance emboldened him so much, as kneeling upon his knees before the majesty of the Duke, aloud he spake these words : “ Alas (my sovereign lord) if ever your grace had pity upon a desolate man, full of despair, I humbly beseech the same that now you do regard the misery which on every side assaileth me. Have pity upon the poverty of that unfortunate old man against whom one hath done such wrong, as I hope by force of your virtue and accustomed justice, you will not leave a sin so detestable without deserved punishment, for respect of mischiefs that may ensue where such wickedness shall be dissembled without due correction.” Saying so, the great tears ran down his hoary beard, and by reason of his interrupted sighs and continual sobs, the panting of his stomach might easily have been perceived all rivelled for age, and sunburned with heat and continual country travel : and that which moved most the standers-by, was the rueful look of the good old man, who casting his looks here and there, beheld each one with his hollow and dolorous eyes, in such wise as if he had not spoken any word, his countenance would have moved the lords to have compassion upon his misery, and his tears were of such force, as the Duke which was a wise man, and who measured things by reason’s guide, provided with wisdom, and foreseeing not without timely judgment, would know the cause

which made that man so to make his plaint, and notwithstanding assailed (with what suspicion I know not) would not have him openly to tell his tale, but leading him aside, he said unto him : “ My friend albeit that grievous faults of great importance, ought grievously and openly to be corrected, yet it chanceth oftentimes, that he which in a heat and choler doth execution for the guilt (although that justly after he hath digested his rage, at leisure he repenteth his rigour and oversudden severity,) offence being natural in man, may sometime (where slander is not evident) by mild and merciful means forget the same without infringing or violating the holy and civil constitutions of lawmakers. I speak thus much because my heart doth throb that some of my house have done some filthy fault against thee or some of thine. Now I would not that they openly should be slandered, and yet less pretend I to leave their faults unpunished, specially such as by whose offensive crime the common peace is molested, wherein I desire, that my people should live. For which purpose God hath constituted princes and potestates as shepherds and guides of His flock, to the end that the tyrannical fury of the vicious, might not destroy, devour and scatter the impotent flock, of no valour if it be forsaken and left forlorn by the mighty arms of principalities and monarchies.” A singular modesty, doubtless, and an incredible example of clemency in him, whom his citizens thought to be a tyrant and unjust usurper of a free seigniory, who so privily and with such familiarity, as the friend could wish of his companion, hearkened to the cause of the poor countryman, and moreover his modesty so great, as

he would it not to be known what fault it was, or else that the offenders should publicly be accused, offering for all that to be the revenger of the wrong done unto the poor, and the punisher of the injury exercised against the desolate, a work certainly worthy of a true Christian prince, and which establisheth kingdoms decayed, conserveth those that be, rendering the prince to be beloved of God, and feared of his subjects. The poor old man seeing the Duke in so good mind, and that accordingly he demanded to know the wrong done unto him, the name of the factor, and that also he had promised him his help and rightful correction due unto the deserved fault, the good old man, I say, conceiving courage, recited from point to point the whole discourse of the rape, and the violence done, upon his poor virtuous daughter, declaring besides the name and surname of those which accompanied the gentleman, the author of that conspiracy, who (as we have already said) was one that was in greatest favour with the Duke: who notwithstanding the love that he bare to the accused, hearing the unworthiness of a deed so execrable, said: "As God liveth this is a detestable fact, and well deserveth a sharp and cruel punishment: notwithstanding friend, take good heed that thou dost not mistake the same, by accusing one for another, for the gentleman whom thou hast named to be the ravisher of thy daughter, is of all men deemed to be very honest, and do well assure thee that if I find thee a liar, thy head shall answer for example to each false accuser and slanderer in time to come. But if the matter be so true as thou hast said, I promise thee by the faith I bear to God, so

well to redress thy wrong, as thou shalt have cause to be thoroughly satisfied with my justice." To whom the good old man thus answered : " My lord the matter is so true, as at this day he keepeth my daughter (like a common strumpet) in his house. And if it please your highness to send thither, you shall know that I do not falsely accuse or utter lying words before you, my Lord and Prince, in presence of whom as before the minister and lieutenant of God, man ought not to speak but truly and religiously." " Sith it is so," said the Duke, " get thee home to thy house, where God willing, I will be this day at dinner, but take heed upon thy life, thou say nothing to any man whatsoever he be : for the rest let me alone, I will provide according to reason." The good man almost so glad for his good exploit, as the day before he was sorrowful for his loss, joyfully went home to his homely house and country cabin, which he caused to be made ready so well as he could, attending the coming of his deliverer, succour, support, and judge, who when he had heard service, commanded his horse to be made ready : " For (said he) I hear say there is a wild boar haunting hereby, so well lodged as is possible to see : we will go thither to wake him from his sleep and ease, and use that pastime till our dinner be ready." So departing from Florence, he rode straight unto the mill where his dinner was prepared by his servants. There he dined very soberly, and using few words unto his company, sat still all pensive, musing upon that he had to do : for on the one side the gravity of the fact moved him rigorously to chastise him which had committed the same. On the other side

the love which he bare him (mollifying his heart) made him change his mind, and to moderate his sentence. The Prince's mind, thus wandering between love and rigour, one brought him word that the dogs had roused the greatest hart that ever he saw: which news pleased him very much, for by that means he sent away the multitude of his gentlemen to follow the chase, retaining with him his most familiar friends, and those that were of his privy and secret council, whom he would to be witnesses of that which he intended to do, and causing his host to come before him, he said: "My friend, thou must bring us to the place whereof this morning thou toldest me, that I may discharge my promise." The courtiers wondered at those words, ignorant whereof the same were spoken: but the good man whose heart leapt for joy, as already feeling some great benefit at hand, and honour prepared for the beautifying of his house, seeing the Duke on horseback, ran beside him instead of his lackey, with whom the Prince held much pleasant talk all along the way as they went together, but they had not gone far, but the gentleman the ravisher, with his companions, understanding that the Duke hunted thereabouts, came to do him reverence: and his fortune was such, as he nor any of his friends perceived the old man, by means whereof they nothing suspected what did ensue. For that cause the said ravisher said to his Prince: "My lord, if fortune had so much favoured me, as I might have known of your coming into these quarters, I would have done my duty to entertain you, not as appertaineth to the greatness of your excellency, but according to the

ability of the least, and yet the most obedient of your servants." To whom the Duke dissembling his anger said: "Sir, I dined here hard by within my tents, not knowing that your house was so near us: but sith that I have met you upon your own marches and confines, I will not go hence before I see your lodging: for so far as I can judge by the outward part of this goodly building, methinks the workman hath not forgotten anything that should serve for the setting forth and ornament of this part of the house, which for the quantity is one of the fairest plots that I have seen." So approaching the castle the Duke alighted to view the commodities of the place, and specially the image, for which alone he was departed from his city, whereof the master of the house (drunk with the sudden pleasure to see the Duke there) thought nothing. So descending into the base court, they saw a marble fountain that discharged the water in four great gutters, received by four naked nymphs, and by them poured into vessels, richly wrought with damascene, where was an armed knight, lying under an high and broad tree, that overshadowed the fountain: and hard by, they espied a little door which showed the way into so singular and well planted a garden, as ever the delicious and pleasant gardens were of Alcinoe: for in the same (besides the artificial workmanship and ordinary travail of the gardener) Nature produced four fountains in the four corners, making the place and plain of garden equally parted in foursquare form. Now these fountains watered all the fair knots of the same, without any pain to the gardener, except to open certain little conduits, whereby the water sprang and ran to

what part he thought it needful. I will here leave to speak of the trees and fruits divided in five-form order, the labyrinths subtly and finely wrought, the sweet arbours yielding such contention to the eye, as if the Duke had not respected the wrong done to the miller's daughter, the gentleness of the master of the house, and the singularity of the place, perchance might have made him forget himself within that little earthly paradise. And to perform the excellency of that garden, the working hand and industry of man, holpen by the benefit of Nature, had formed within the ground wherein were bestowed a number of antiquities, and wherein the immortal voice of an echo answered their talk with a triple sound in that profound and earthly place : which moved the Duke to call the gentleman unto him, unto whom he said : " If it be so, that the rest of the house do match with that which I have already seen, I am out of doubt it is one of the fairest and most delectable houses at this day within the compass of all Italy. Wherefore my friend, I pray thee that we may see the whole, both for the contention of our minds, and also that I may make some vaunt that I have seen the rarest and best furnished little house that is within the jurisdiction of Florence." The gentleman bathed in ease and full of pleasure, seeing that the Duke liked so well his house, brought him from chamber to chamber, which was enriched either with stately tapestry of Turkey making, or with rich tables divinely wrought, utensils so neat and fit, as the Duke could cast his eye upon none of them, but he was driven into an admiration and wonder. And the further he went, the greater he saw the increase, and

almost a regeneration, or as I may say, a new birth of rare things, which made the littleness of the place more stately and wonderful : wherefore he greatly esteemed him in his mind which had devised the magnificence of such a furniture. After then that he had visited the portals, galleries, parlours, chambers, garrets, wardrobes, closets, and chiefest rooms of that house, they came into a gallery, which had a direct prospect upon the garden, at the end whereof there was a chamber shut, over which such antique and embossed work, as it was marvel to behold, and upon the garden side in like workmanship, ye might have viewed a troop of nymphs (along the side of a wood adjoining upon a great river) flying from a herd of satyrs, that made as though they would have overrun them : a pleasure it was to see their gaping mouths, their eyes fixed upon the place where their cloven-footed pursuers were, and the countenance of them, which so well expressed their fear, as there wanted nothing but speech. Moreover a better sight it was to behold the satyr bucks, with displayed throat, and their fingers pointing at the haste of those poor fearful runaways, as though they mocked their sudden flight. Within a while after ye might have seen Hercules lying abed with his wife, towards whom Faunus came thinking to enjoy the beauty and embracements of the sleeping dame : but fairer it was to see how that strong Amphitrian gave him the mock, and strained him so hard, as he thought his belly would burst. The Duke beholding as he thought, the fairest chamber of the house so shut, by and by suspected the truth of the cause : for the gentleman knowing the coming of the Duke had

withdrawn his woman into the same, for that it was the most secret of his house, and the furthest from all ordinary service. Upon surmise the Duke demanded wherefore the chamber was not opened so well as the rest : “ I suppose the same to be your treasure house ? ” (quod he) “ and the storehouse of your most delicate things : we pray you let us look into it.” “ My lord ” (said the gentleman) “ the place is too far out of order, at this time to show your grace : moreover I know not where the keys be, for this morning the keeper of my house is gone into the city, and I cannot tell to whom he hath delivered them.” The Duke which heard the end of his excuse, not accepting the same for the price which the courtier would and thought to have sold it, was sure then of that which before he did suspect. Wherefore with furious countenance he said unto him : “ Go to, go to, either with the key or without the key, let this door be opened, that I may see all thy secrets within.” The ravisher seeing the Duke to be earnest, could not tell at the first face, of what wood to make his arrows, stood still astonished, and was surprised with a new fear. In the end notwithstanding, playing the good fellow, he went unto the Duke, in whose ear smiling he whispered (because he knew right well that the Duke was an indifferent good companion, and loved so well his neighbour’s wife, as his own :) and said : “ My lord there is a pretty wench within, whom I do keep, and would not show her to any living man but to you.” “ That is the cause I ask ” (said the Duke) “ let us see her that I may give judgment of her beauty, and tell you whether she be worth the keeping or not.” The

master of the house opened the chamber door, thinking to have gained much, and supposed to insinuate himself the better into the favour of the Duke, but immediately he saw himself far deceived of his account. For the ravished and shamefast maiden coming forth of the chamber with her hair about her eyes, and her garments berent and torn, her stomach and breast all naked and discovered, her face and eyes all blubbered with tears, like a desperate woman threw herself at the Prince's feet, crying out: "Ah (my lord) behold here and have pity upon the most unfortunate wench of all most wretched caitiff women, who shamefully and traitorously hath been abused and deflowered by him, which impudently dareth to bring you into the place the witness of his abominable and wicked life." The Duke seeing this sight, and having compassion upon the maiden, turned his face towards the gentleman and his companions (which by chance were come thither, as the Duke was entered into the gallery) not with mild and pleasant countenance as he showed from the beginning, but with a look so grave and severe, as the hardiest of the company could not tell what to do, or what answer to make him. Upon them then began the righteous Prince to vomit his displeasure, saying: "Is this the ennobling of the blood whereof thou art descended, to ravish thy neighbour's and my subject's daughters, that dutifully live under mine obeisance and protection? Dost thou thus abuse the familiarity which hitherto I have showed unto thee? Thinkest thou that the laws be perverted together with the change of the commonwealth of Florence? No, I assure thee, for so long as the soul shall abide

within my body, I will be he that shall pursue the wicked with all extremity, and shall not endure the oppression of the poor, enough afflicted with their own proper misery. O God, could I have thought that a gentleman of my house, would have been so prodigal of his honour, as to soil his hands so filthily by ravishing of them which ought to be required, and to dishonour them in place where their virtue ought to shine for general example ? I cannot tell what stayeth me from cutting those cursed heads of yours from off your shoulders like arrant traitors and thieves as you be. Get ye hence ye infamous villains and beastly ruffians, the troublers of your neighbours' rest, and the spoilers of the fame of her, that is more worth than all ye together." Then speaking to the maid he said : " Rise up my wench, and on me repose thy comfort, for I promise thee by the faith of a gentleman, that I will do thee such reason, and use thee so uprightly as both my conscience shall be quieted, thou contented, and thine honour restored for the wrong and injury which it hath received of these gallants." And by and by he commanded the miller to come before him, and all those whom he had brought with him to assist his doings, before whom he caused to be brought both the ravished maiden, and the condemned of the rape : unto whom he said : " This is the prey my friends that I sought after, which I have taken without toils, nets, or chanting of the dogs. Behold, I pray you the honour which my household servants do unto my house, who overrun the simple country people, and ravish their daughters between the arms of their proper parents, who break, beat down, and overthrow the doors of

their houses, that under the laws of our city and ought to enjoy like privilege of liberty and franchise. If one respect (which I will not disclose) did not impeach and stay me, I would do such cruel justice upon the offenders as the posterity should make report thereof. Notwithstanding it shall suffice that they receive this shame before you all, by seeing themselves vanquished of a crime, which for expiation and revenge, deserveth most shameful death, and to receive of me for proof of mercy, an undeserved pardon of their fault : with condition nevertheless that thou (speaking to the gentleman ravisher) shalt take this maiden to wife, (for otherwise thou art not able to repair the honour thou hast taken from her) and shalt love her so dearly, as fondly heretofore she was beloved of thee, to esteem and love her so much, as if she were the very sister of me the Duke of Florence, who commandeth thee for the ransom and redemption of thy head, presently to marry her. I will moreover, and ordain by reason of her father's poverty, that for the wrong which he hath received of you three, that his daughter shall be endowed with two thousand crowns by him that marrieth her, and with a thousand of either of the two other, to the intent that if her husband die (without heir), she have wherewith honestly to maintain her degree, and the honest port of her house. And hereof I will that without delay a contract be made, and a public instrument of good record enrolled, swearing once again before thee, that if I understand, thou use her otherwise, than a wife ought to be of her husband, I will deal such punishment and correction over thee, as all men in time to come shall take example." The

gentleman which expected no better meed than death, joyful of that sentence, fell down prostrate before the Duke in sign of consent, and the like did his companions. But the joy of the miller and his daughter cannot be expressed, who extolled the virtue and justice of their prince up into the heavens : to whom with such humility they rendered their humble thanks, as he would do that saw himself in so great calamity, and brought to such dishonour as erst they were seen to be, by means of him that acknowledged one of them for his son, and the other for her lawful spouse. Thus was the marriage consummate in presence of the Duke, with so great joy, and content of all parties, as there was rage and trouble for the rape of the bride. The Duke being returned to Florence, the bruit of this act incontinently was dissparkled almost throughout the region of Italy, and this judgment no less praised, than the sentence which King Solomon gave upon the controversy of the two harlots for the living child, which either of them claimed for her own. And for this cause was he extolled above any other prince or lord that in times past did command or rule the commonwealth within the country of Tuscany. In this wise that modesty made him worthy of the Principality, which almost against all right he had usurped, and of a praise which shall no less continue, than the memory of man is able to extend the same from one generation to another, and which those that be covetous of the praise of a prince so virtuous, just and modest, shall not cease to illustrate and gloriously advance him in open evidence, to the end that his like may exercise like things, or of greater consequence, by not suffering

venomous and unprofitable herbs to grow within the garden of their commonwealth. Within the which, a little mildew or untimely rain, is able to mar and corrupt all the good seeds and plants sown, and grafted there before: for commonly wicked weeds and bastard imps take deeper root than those that bear a good and savourous fruit, for conservation whereof, the diligent husbandman employeth his labour throughout all the seasons of the year.

SOPHONISBA

The unhappy end and success of the love of King Masinissa and Queen Sophonisba, his wife.

IF men would have afore-consideration of their own doings, before they do attempt the same, or else premeditate and study the scope and success thereof, I do verily believe that a number would not cast themselves headlong into so many gulfs of miseries and calamities as they do, specially noblemen, and princes, who oftentimes do exceed in temerity and rashness, by letting the reins of their own lusts, too far to range at large, wherein they deeply plunge themselves to their great prejudice and dishonour, as teacheth this goodly history ensuing, which declarereth that there was a Prince called Masinissa, the son of Gala King of Massæzali, (a people of Numidia) : who warfaring with the Carthaginians in Spain against the Romans, having first fought honourably against King Syphax in Numidia, it chanced that Gala his father died, upon whose death his kingdom was invaded and occupied by other, wherefore sustaining stoutly the surges of daversity combating with his enemies, sometimes getting part of his kindom, and sometimes losing and many times molesting both Syphax and the Carthaginians, was in divers conflicts like to be taken or slain. With these his travels

impatient of no pain and trouble, he became very famous and renowned, that amongst the people of Africa, he acquired the name and title of a valiant and puissant soldier, and of a politic and provident captain: afterwards he was generally well-beloved of the soldiers, because not like the king's son or a prince, but as a private soldier and companion, his conversation and usual trade of life was amongst them, calling every man by his proper name, cherishing and esteeming them according to their desert, observing nevertheless a certain comeliness of a superior. This Masinissa by means of one Syllanus being in Spain, privily entered acquaintance and familiarity with that Scipio which afterwards was surnamed Africanus, and who in those days with the authority of Proconsul in that province, victoriously subdued the Carthaginians: the same Masinissa entered league with the Romans and inviolably so long as he lived observed amity with the Roman people, and left the same to his children and posterity as an inheritance. When the Romans began wars in Africa, speedily with that power he was able to make, he repaired to his old friend Scipio: within a while after Syphax being overthrown in battle and taken, Masinissa and Lælius were sent to surprise the chief city of that kingdom, which sometimes were King Syphax' own, called Cirta. In that city remained Sophonisba, the wife of Syphax and daughter to Hasdrubal of Giscan, who had alienated her husband from the Romans, being in league with them, and by her persuasions went to aid and defend the Carthaginians. Sophonisba perceiving that the enemies were entered the city of Cirta: and that

Masinissa was going towards the palace, determined to meet him, to prove his gentleness and courtesy, whereupon in the midst of his soldiers' throng which were already entered the palace, she stoutly thrust, and boldly looked round about, to prove if she could espy by some signs and tokens the personage of Masinissa. She among that press perceived one for whose apparel, armour and reverence done unto him, seemed unto her that without doubt the same was the king: and therefore incontinently kneeled down before him, and piteously began to speak in this manner: "For so much (O puissant prince) as felicity and good fortune, but specially the favour of the Gods immortal have permitted, that thou shouldest recover thine ancient kingdom descended unto thee by right and lawful inheritance, and therewithal hast taken and vanquished thine enemy, and now hast me at thy will and pleasure to save or spill, I poor wretched miserable woman brought into bondage from queen-like state, whilom leading a delicate life in princely court, accompanied with a royal train of beautiful dames, and now at thy merciful disposition, do humbly appeal to thy mercy and goodness, whose princely majesty and comfortable aspect, cheereth up my woeful heart to look for grace, and therefore am bold thus to presume with most humble voice to implore and cry out, beseeching thee to reach me hither thy victorious hands to kiss and salute." This lady was a passing fair gentlewoman, of flourishing age and comely behaviour, none comparable unto her within the whole region of Africa: and so much the more as her pleasant grace by amiable gesture of complaint

did increase, so much the heart of Masinissa was delighted, who being lusty and of youthful age (according to the nature of the Numides) was easily entrapped and tangled in the nets of love: whose glutting eyes were never full, nor fiery heart was satisfied in beholding and wondering at her most excellent beauty: not foreseeing therefore, or taking heed of the dangerous effect of beauty's snares, his heart being so fiercely kindled with the swingeing flames of love, who causing her to rise, exhorted her to prosecute her supplication: then she began to proceed as followeth: "If it may be lawful for me thy prisoner and bondwoman (O my sovereign lord) to make request, I humbly do beseech thee, by thy royal majesty, wherein no long time past my husband and I were magnificently placed in so kinglike guise as thou art now, and by that Numidical name, common unto thee and my husband Syphax, and by the saving Gods and Patrons of this city, who with better fortune and more joyful success do receive thee into the same, that expelled Syphax out from thence: it may please thy sacred state, to have pity on me. I require no hard and difficult thing at thy hands, use thine imperial government over me, such as law of arms and reason of war require: cause me if thou wilt, to pine in cruel prison, or do me to such death with torments, as thou list to use, the sharp, fierce and cruel death that any wight can suffer, or perilous bull shall not be dreadful unto me, but more dear and acceptable than wonted life in pleasures led: for no death shall be refused of me, rather than to be rendered into the proud hands of the most cruel Romans. Rather had I test the trust of a native

Numidian born with me in African soil, than the faith of stranger kind : I know full well that thou dost know what courtesy a Carthaginian and daughter of Hasdrubal, shall surely look for at the Romans' hands : whose mind is fearful of nothing more than of their pride and glory intolerable : if thou (my lord) hadst sisters of thine own, or daughters of thy royal blood brought forth think that they may chance (if fortune frown) to slide into the pit of adverse luck, so well as I am now : of that form Fortune's wheel is made, which we daily see to be unstable, turning and diverse, that now peace and now war it promiseth, now evil it threateneth, now mirth, now sorrow it bringeth, now advancing aloft, now tumbling down the climbers up. Let Syphax be clear and lively example to thee, which could never find any steadfast stay under the moon's globe. He was the mightiest and the richest king that reigned in Africa, and now is the most miserable and unlucky wight that liveth on land. The Gods grant that I be no prophet or diviner of future evil, whose omnipotency I devoutly beseech to suffer thee and thy posterity in Numidian land and most happily to reign. Vouchsafe then to deliver me from the Roman thraldom, which if thou be not able safely to bring to pass, cause death (the ease of all woe) to be inflicted upon me." In speaking those words, she took the king's right hand and many times sweetly kissed the same. And then her tears turned to pleasant cheer, in such wise as not only the mind of the armed and victorious prince was moved to mercy, but strangely wrapped in the amorous nets of the lady, whereby the victor was subdued by the vanquished, and the lord

surprised of his captive, whom with trembling voice thus he answered : “ Make an end, O Sophonisba, of thy large complaint, abandon thy conceived fear, for I will not only rid thee from the Roman hands, but also take thee to my lawful wife (if thou therewith shalt be content) whereby thou shalt not lead a prisoner’s life, but pass thy youthful days and hoary age (if gods do grant thy life so long) as queen unto a king, and wife unto a Roman friend.” When he had said so with weeping tears, he kissed and embraced her. She by the countenance, signs, gests, and interrupted words, comprehending the mind of the Numidian king to be kindled with fervent love : the more to inflame the same bemoaned herself with such heaviness, as the beastly hearts of the Hyrcanian tigers would have been made gentle and despoiled of all fierceness, if they had beheld her : and again she fell down at his feet, kissing the armed sabbatons upon the same, and bedewing them with her warm tears. After many sobs and infinite sighs, comforted by him, she said : “ O the glory and honour of all the kings that ever were, be, or shall be hereafter : O the safest aid of Carthage mine unhappy country without desert, and now the present and most terrible astonishment : if my hard fortune and distress after so great ruin might have been relieved, what greater favour, what thing in all my life, could chance more fortunate unto me, than to be called wife of thee ? O, I blessed above all other women to have a man so noble and famous to husband. O mine adventurous and most happy ruin. O my most fortunate misery, that such a glorious and incomparable marriage was prepared for me : but because the Gods be so con-

trary unto me, and the due end of my life approacheth (my dear sovereign lord) to kindle again in me, my hope half dead, or rather consumed and spent, because I see myself wrapped in a state, that in vain against the pleasures of the Gods, I go about to molest thee: a great gift (and to say truth) a right great good turn, I make account to have received of thee, if mine own death I should procure by thee, that dying by thy means or with thy hands (which were more acceptable) I should escape the fear of the Roman thrall and subjection, and this soul delivered of the same, should straight pass into the Elysian fields. The final scope of this my humble plaint, is to rid me from the hands of the Romans, whose thraldom to suffer I had rather die. The other benefit which thou dost frankly offer to me poor wretch, I dare not desire, much less require the same, because the present state of my mishap dareth not presume so high. But for this thy pity and compassion, joined with loving regard and mind toward me, mighty Jove with all the other Gods reward and bless thy gotten kingdom in long reign, enlarging the same with more ample bounds to thine eternal renown and praise: and I do not only render humble thanks for this thy kind and loving entertainment, but also yield myself thine own, so long as life governeth this caitiff corpse of mine." These words were pronounced with such effect, as Masinissa was not able for pity to hold his tears, which watered so his comely form, as the dew thereof soaked into his tender heart, and not able a long time to speak, at last thus he said: " Give over (O my queen) these cares and thoughts, dry up thy cries

and plaints, make an end of all these dolorous suits, and rejoice, that froward Fortune hath changed her mind: the Gods no doubt with better success, will perform the rest of thy living days. Thou shalt henceforth remain my queen and wife, for pledge whereof the sacred Godheads I call to witness. But if perchance (which the thundering mighty God above forbid) that I shall be forced to render thee the Romans prisoner, be well assured, that alive they shall not possess thee." For credit and accomplishment of this promise, and in sign of his assured faith, he reached his right hand to Sophonisba, and led her into the inner lodging of the king's palace, where afterward Masinissa with himself considering how he might perform his promised faith, vexed and troubled with a thousand cogitations, seeing in a manner his manifest overthrow and ruin at hand, provoked with mad and temerarious love, the very same day in open presence he took her to wife, solemnizing that marriage which afterwards bred unto him great vexation and trouble, meaning by the same to have discharged Sophonisba from the Roman rule and order. But when Lælius was come and heard tell thereof, he fretted and chafed, and with threatening words commanded Masinissa to send his new married wife (as the booty and prey of the Romans) together with Syphax, to their captain Scipio. Notwithstanding, vanquished with the supplications and tears of Masinissa, referring the matter wholly to the judgment of Scipio, he dispatched Syphax with the other prisoners and booty, to the Roman camp, and he himself remained with Masinissa for the recovery of other places of the

kingdom, minding not to return before the whole province were brought under the Roman subjection. In the meantime Lælius gave intelligence unto Scipio, of the success of Masinissa his marriage: who knowing the same to be so hastily celebrated, was marvellously offended and troubled in mind, much marvelling that Masinissa would make such post haste before the coming of Lælius. Yea and upon the very first day of his entry into Cirta, that he would consummate that unadvised wedding: and the greater was Scipio his displeasure towards Masinissa, for that the love which he had conceived of that woman, was unseemly and dishonest, wondering not a little that he could not find out some lady within the region of Spain of semblable beauty and comeliness to please and content his honest and commendable intent: wherefore he judged Masinissa his fact to be done out of time, to the prejudice and great decay of his honour and estimation. Howbeit like a wise and prudent personage he dissembled his conceived grief, expecting occasion for remedy of the same. Now the time was come that Lælius and Masinissa were sent for to the camp. But to declare the tears and lamentable talk, the great moan and sighs uttered between this new married couple, time would want, and tediousness would overcome the reader. He had scarce lain with his beloved two or three nights, but Lælius (to their great grief and sorrow) claimed her to be his prisoner. Wherefore very sorrowful and pensive he departed, and returned to the camp. Scipio in honourable wise accepted him, and openly before his captains and men of war, gave thanks to Lælius and him, for their prowess,

and notable exploits. Afterwards sending for him unto his tent, he said unto him : “ I do suppose (my dear friend Masinissa) that the virtue and benevolence which you saw in me did first of all provoke you, to transfrete the straits, to visit me in Spain, wherein the good will of my valiant friend Syllanus did not a little avail, to solicit and procure amity between us. And the same afterwards inducing your constant mind, to retire into Africa committed both yourself and all your goods into my hands and keeping. But I well pondering the quality of that virtue which moved you thereunto, you being of Africa and I of Europe, you a Numidian born, and I a Latin and Roman, of diverse customs and language different, thought that the temperance and abstinence from venereal pleasures which you have seen to be in me, and experience thereof well tried and proved, (for the which I render unto the immortal Gods most humble thanks) would or ought to have moved you to follow mine example, being virtues which above all other I do most esteem and cherish. For he that well marketh the rare gifts and excellent benefits wherewith dame Nature hath arrayed you, would think that there should be no lack of diligence and travail to subdue and overcome the carnal appetites of temporal beauty : which had it been applied to the rare gifts of nature planted in you had made you a personage to the posterity very famous and renowned. Consider well my present time of youth, full of courage and youthful lust, which contrary to that natural race I stay and prohibit. No delicate beauty, no voluptuous delectation, no feminine flattery, can entice my youth and state to the perils

and dangers whereunto that heedless age is most prone and subject. By which prohibition of amorous passions, temperately reined and governed, the tamer and subduer of those passions, closing his breast from lascivious imaginations, and stopping his ears from the sirens and mermaids of that sex and kind, getteth greater glory and fame, than we have gotten by our victory against Syphax. Hannibal the greatest enemy that ever we Romans felt, the stoutest gentleman and captain without peer, through the delights and embracements of women effeminated, is no more the manlike and notable emperor that he was wont to be. The great exploits and enterprises which valiantly you have done in Numidia, when I was far from you, your care, readiness, animosity, your strength and valour, your expedition and bold attempts, with all the rest of your noble virtues worthy of immortal praise, I might and could particularly recite, but to commend and extol them my heart and mind shall never be satisfied, by renovation whereof I should rather give occasion of blushing, than myself could be contented to let them sleep in silence. Syphax as you know is taken prisoner by the valiance of our men of war, by reason whereof himself, his wife, his kingdom, his camp, lands, cities and inhabitants, and briefly all that which was King Syphax is the prey and spoil to the Roman people and the king and his wife, albeit she was no citizen of Carthage, and her father, although no captain of our enemies, yet we must send them to Rome, there to leave them at the pleasure and disposition of the Roman Senate and people. Do you not know that Sophonisba with her toys and flatteries did

alienate and withdraw King Syphax from our amity and friendship, and made him to enter force of arms against us ? Be you ignorant that she, full of rancour and malice against the Roman people, endeavoured to set all Africa against us, and now by her fair enticements hath gained and won you, not I say our enemy, but an enemy so far as she can, with her cruel enchantments ? What damage and hurt have lighted upon divers monarchs and princes through sugared lips and venomous words, I will not spend time to recite. With what provocations and conjured charms she hath already bewitched your good nature, I will not now imagine, but refer the same to the deep consideration of your wisdom. Wherefore Masinissa, as you have been a conqueror over great nations and provinces, be now a conqueror of your own mind and appetites, the victory whereof deserveth greater praise than the conquest of the whole world. Take heed I say, that you blot not your good qualities and conditions, with the spots of dishonour and pusillanimity. Obscure not that fame which hitherto is advanced above the region of the glittering stars. Let not this vice of feminine flattery spoil the deserts of noble chivalry, and utterly deface those merits with greater ignominy than the cause of that offence is worthy of dispraise.”

Masinissa hearing these eager and sharp rebukes, not only blushed for shame, but bitterly weeping, said : that his poor prisoner and wife was at the commandment of Scipio. Notwithstanding, so instantly as tears could suffer him to speak he besought him, that if it were possible he would give him leave to observe his faith foolishly assured,

because he had made an oath to Sophonisba that with life she should not be delivered to the hands of the Romans. And after other talk between them, Masinissa retired to his pavilion, where alone with manifold sighs, and most bitter tears and plaints, uttered with such howlings and outcries, as they were heard by those which stood near hand, he rested all the day bewailing his present state: the most part of the night also he spent with like heaviness, and debating in his mind upon divers thoughts and devices, more confused and amazed than before, he could by no means take rest: sometimes he thought to flee, and pass the straits commonly called the Pillars of Hercules, from thence to sail to the Fortunate Islands with his wife: then again he thought with her to escape to Carthage, and in aid of that city to serve against the Romans, sometimes he proposed by sword, poison, halter or some such means to end his life and finish his dolorous days. Many times he was at point by prepared knife and sword to pierce his heart, and yet stayed the same, not for fear of death, but for preservation of his fame and honour. Thus this wretched and miserable lover burned and consumed in love: tossing and tumbling himself upon his bed, not able to find comfort to ease his pain, thus began to say: "O Sophonisba, my dear beloved wife, O the life and comfort of my life, O the dainty repast of my joy and quiet, what shall become of us? Alas and out alas I cry, that I shall see no more thine incomparable beauty, thy surpassing comely face, those golden locks, those glistening eyes which a thousand times have darkened and obscured the rays and beams of the sun itself:

Alas, I say, that I can no longer be suffered to hear the pleasant harmony of thy voice whose sweetness is able to force Jupiter himself to mitigate his rage when with lightning thunderbolts and stormy claps in his greatest fury he meaneth to plague the earth. Ah, that it is not lawful any more for me to throw these unhappy arms about thy tender neck, whose whiteness of face intermingled with seemly rudds, excelleth the morning roses, which by sweet nightly dews do sprout and bud. The Gods grant that I do not long remain alive without thy sweet haunt and company, which can no longer draw forth this breathing ghost of mine, than can a body live without like breath in it. Grant (O mighty Jupiter) that one grave may close us twain to live among the ghosts and shadows that be already past this world for like right loving fits, if intent of life be meant to me without thy fellowship and delectable presence. And who (O good God) shall be more blissful amongst the Elysian fields, wandering amid the spirits and ghosts of departed souls, than I, if there we two may jet and stalk amongst the shadowed friths and forests huge, beset with myrtle trees, odoriferous and sweet? That there we may at large recount and sing the sweet and sour pangs of those our past loves without any stay or let at all: that there I say we may remember things already done, rejoicing for delights and sighing for the pains. There shall no hard-hearted Scipio be found, there shall no marble-minded captain rest, which have not had regard of love's toys, ne yet have pitied bitter pains, by having no experience what is the force of love. He then with over-cruel words shall not go about to persuade

me to forsake thee, or to deliver thee into the Romans' hands, to incur miserable and most cruel bondage : he shall there never check me for the fervent love I bear thee : we shall there abide without suspicion of him or any other : they cannot separate us, they be not able to divide our sweetest company. I would the Gods above had granted me the benefit, that he had never arrived into Africa, but had still remained in Sicilia, in Italy or Spain. But what stand I upon these terms, O I fool and beast ? What means my drowsy head to dream such fancies ? If he had not passed over into Africa, and made war against King Syphax, how should I have ever seen my fair Sophonisba, whose beauty far surmounteth each other wight, whose comeliness is without peer, whose grace unspeakable, whose manners rare and incomparable, and whose other qualities generally disparkled throughout Dame Nature's mould by speech of man cannot be described ? If Scipio had not transfreted the seas to arrive in African soil, how should I, (O only hope and last refuge of my desires) have known thee, neither should I have been thy fere, ne yet my wife thou shouldest have been, but great had been thy gain and loss not much ; never shouldest thou have felt the present painful state, wherein thou art, thy life (whereof most worthy no doubt thou art) should not have lain in balance poise, or rested in doubtful plight, which now in choice of enemies' thrall thou mayest prolong, or else in Romans' hands a prey or spoil by captive state. But I beseech the Gods to prevent the choice to be a Roman prisoner. And who can think that Scipio ever meant to grant me the life of one, and goeth about to spoil me of

the same? Did not he give me the pardon of one, when he sent me to besiege the city of Cirta, where I found fair Sophonisba which is my life? A strange kind of pardon, by giving me a pardon to dispossess me of the same. Who ever heard tell of such a pardon? So much as if he said to me, thus: 'Masinissa, go take the pain to cause the city yield, and ransack it by force, and I will pardon thee thy life. And not with the only benefit, but with Crœsus's goods I will enrich thee, and make thee owner of the happy soil of Arabia,' and when I have so done and rased the walls by mine endeavour, wherein mine only life and joy did rest, at my return for guerdon of that noble fact, instead of life he choppeth off my head, and for fair promise of golden mounts, he strips me naked, and makes me a Roman slave: according to which case and state he deals with me. For what avails my life, if in grief and sorrow's gulf I drown the pleasures of the same? Doth not he bereave my life and breeds my death by dividing me from my fair Sophonisba? Ah caitiff wretch, what luck have I, that neither storm nor whirlwind could send him home to Italian shore, or set him packing to Sicily's land? What meant cruel Scipio, when so soon as Syphax was taken, he did not straightway dispatch him to Rome, to present the glorious sight of the Numidian king to the Roman people? If Scipio had not been here, thou Sophonisba frankly hadst been mine: for at Lælius's hands I could have found some grace: but surely if Scipio did once see Sophonisba, and reclined his eyes to view her peerless beauty, I doubt not but he would be moved to have compassion upon her and me, and would

judge her worthy not only to be Queen of Numidia but of all the province besides. But what, do I make this good account? The common proverb saith, that he which counteth before his host, must reckon twice: and so perhaps may be my lot: for what know I if Scipio did well view her, whether himself would be enamoured of her or not, and so utterly deprive me of that jewel? He is a man no doubt as others be, and it is impossible methinks, but that the hardness of his heart must bow to the view of such a noble beauty. But (beast as I am) what mean these words? What follies do I vaunt by singing to the deaf, and teaching of the blind? O wretch, wretch, nay more than miserable wretch. Mark the words of Scipio, he demandeth Sophonisba, as a thing belonging unto him, for which cause he saith that she is the prey and part of the Roman spoil: but what shall I do? Shall I give her unto him? He will have her, he constrains me, he exhorts me, he prays me, but I know full well whereunto those entreaties tend, and under the grass what lurking serpent lieth. Shall I then put into his hands mine own Sophonisba? But before I do so, the omnipotent God above, with his flashing fires and flaming brands shall thunder me down into the depth of hell. The gaping ground receive my corpse, before I yield to that request, the trampling steeds of savage kind do tear my members in thousand gobbets, the desert beasts consume my flesh, the ravening gripes and carrion kites pick out my tongue and eyes, before I glut his ravenous mind with that demand to break the faith which by holy oath I have promised to perform. O cursed caitiff, but what shall I do then?

it behoveth to obey, and in despite of my teeth to do that which the Roman Emperor commandeth. Alas, by thinking upon that strait and needful lot, I die a thousand deaths: wherefore of evils to choose the least of twain, and to preserve my plighted faith, O sweet Sophonisba, thou must die, and by means of thy beloved fere, shalt void the yoke of Roman thrall, for so it pleaseth unmindful Jove to appoint. The wretched Heavens by cruel fate have thrown their lot, that I of mine own mischief shall be the minister. And so (O life most dear) I shall perform the effect to keep the faith which last of all before thy face I did confirm." By this speech and manner of talk, the good prince bewailed his case, excogitating by what means he might do to death the thing which above all the world he loved best: at length it came unto his mind to send her a draught of poisoned drink, which device he had no sooner found, but he was driven into a new kind of fury, and kindled with disdain, his brains were on fire with extreme madness, and as though Sophonisba had been before him, he talked and raved in Bedlam wise: sometimes with taunts he checked her to her teeth, sometimes lamented her unfortunate state, sometimes with paws displayed, he seemed to ramp into her face and then again into amorous toys his passions drove him forth. When I do think what kind of a man Masinissa was, who indeed was a crowned and most noble king, and who with such prudence governed his new-conquered and recovered kingdoms, and so constantly persevered in amity of the Roman people, I pray to God to grant my friends and myself also, not to enter into so intricate and lovesome labyrinth,

wherein this noble prince was tangled, and with more temperance to govern our beloved things. But returning again to this afflicted gentleman Masinissa. He sent unto his beloved wife and queen a pot of poison to rid her of her life: but yet staying his messenger, he cried out these words: "God forbid that I should commit this infamous murder upon her whom I most dearly love, I would rather convey her into the extreme parts of the unknown sandy coast of Libya, where the country is full of venomous beasts and crawling poisoned serpents, in which we shall be safe and sure from the danger of cruel and inexorable Scipio, by which means he shall never see the rare and divine beauty, which the serpents once beholding, will mitigate and assuage their bitter poison, and for whose sake they will not annoy ne yet hurt me her loving husband and companion: wherefore let us make haste to flee thither, to avoid the bondage and death prepared for us: and if so be we be not able to carry with us gold and silver, yet shall we not want there some relief to maintain our lives: for better it is to feed on bread and water, than to live in perpetual thraldom. And living with thee (sweet wife) what poverty and beggary am not I able to sustain? The storms of exile and penury, I have already suffered: for being driven out of my kingdom many times, I have repaired to obscure dens and caves, where I have hidden myself, and lived in the wilderness among the savage beasts. But what mean I thus to say of myself, whom no misadventure can affray or mislike? But thou dear wife which hast been trained up and nourished amongst the delicacies and banquets of the

court, accompanied with trains of many fair and noble ladies, living like a queen in all kind of pleasures and delights : what shall I do with thee ? I know thy heart will not suffer thee to follow me, and yet if the same would serve thee, from whence shall I procure present shipping ? Upon the sea the Roman fleet bears swinge, upon the land Scipio with his army occupieth every coast, and is general lord of the field. What then shall I most miserable and unfortunate caitiff do ? For whilst I am thus making my bitter plaints, the night is passed away, daylight approacheth, and the bright shining morning beginneth to clear the earth. And behold yonder cometh the general's messenger for Sophonisba, whom I must either deliver into his hands or else commit her to present slaughter, being assured that she had rather make choice to die, than fall into the laps of the cruel Romans." Whereupon he determined to send her the poison, and for very sorrow fell down upon the ground like a man half dead. Afterwards being come again to himself, he cursed the earth, the air, the fire, heaven, hell, and all the Gods of the same, and exclaiming in lamentable wise he called unto him one of his most faithful servants, who according to the custom of those days, always kept poison in store, and said unto him : " Receive this cup of gold, and deliver the same with the poison, to Queen Sophonisba now abiding within the city of Cirta, and tell her that I with greatest good will would fain have kept the marriage knot, and the first faith which I plighted unto her, but the lord of the field, in whose power I am, hath utterly forbidden the same. I have assayed all possible means to preserve her my

wife and queen at liberty, but he which commandeth me, hath pronounced such hard and cruel sentence, as I am forced to offend myself, and to be the minister of mine own mischief. This poison I send her with so doleful message, as my poor heart (God knoweth) doth only feel the smart, being the most sorrowful present that ever was offered to any fair lady. This is the way alone to save her from the Romans' hands. Pray her to consider the worthiness of her father, the dignity of her country, and the royal majesty of the two kings her husbands, and to do as her mind and will shall fancy best. Get thee hence with all possible speed, and lose no time to do this message: for thou shalt carry the bane and present death of the fairest lady that ever Nature framed within her fairest mould." The servant with this commandment did depart, and Masinissa like a child beaten with a rod, wept and cried. The messenger being come to the queen, and giving her the cup with the poison, declared his cruel ambassage. The queen took the poisoned cup, and said unto the messenger: "Give the king thy master mine humble thanks, and say unto him, that I receive and drink this poison with a will so good, as if he had commanded me to enter in triumph with laurel garland over mine enemies: for a better gift a husband cannot give to wife, than accomplishment of assured faith the funerals whereof shall be done with present obsequy." And saying nothing else unto the messenger, she took the cup, and mingling well together the poison within, she unfearfully quaffed it up: and when she had drunk it she delivered the messenger his cup again, and laid herself upon her bed, commanding her gentlewomen

in comely wise to cover her with clothes, and without lamentation or sign of feminine mind, she stoutly waited for approaching death. The gentlewomen which waited upon her, bewailed the rueful state of their mistress ; whose plaints and screeches were heard throughout the palace, whereof the bruit and rumour was great. But the good queen vanquished with the strong force of the poison, continued not long before she died. The messenger returned these heavy news unto Masinissa, who so sorrowfully complained the loss of his beloved wife, in such wise as many times he was like to kill himself, that his soul might have accompanied the ghost of her which was beloved of him above all the dearest things of the world. The valiant and wise captain Scipio understanding the news hereof, to the intent Masinissa should not commit any cruelty against himself, or perpetrate other uncomely deed called him before him, and comforted him with the sweetest words he could devise, and friendly reproved him. The next day in the presence of all the army he highly commended him, and rewarded him with the kingdom of Numidia, giving him many rich jewels and treasures and brought him in great estimation amongst the Romans : which the Senate and people of Rome very well approved and confirmed with most ample privileges, attributing unto him the title of King of Numidia, and friend of the Romans. Such was the end of the unhappy love of King Masinissa, and of the fair and luckless Queen Sophonisba.

A DOCTOR OF THE LAWS

A Doctor of the Laws bought a cup, who by the subtlety of two false varlets, lost both his money and the cup.

TO conclude our number of novels, I have thought good (gentle reader) to bring in place a doctor and his wife, to give thee a merry farewell : because thou hast hitherto so friendly and patiently suffered thyself to be stayed in reading of the rest : wherefore with a pleasant adieu in a short and merry tale, which discloseth the subtlety of two false knaves to beguile a poor doctor and his wife, I mean to end. And therefore do say, that in the city of Bologna in Italy, there was a worshipful doctor of the laws, called Master Florien, which in other things saving his profession was but a sloven, and of so ill behaviour as none of his faculty the like : who by saving of many crusts, had laid up so good store of crowns, as he caused to be made a very great and costly cup of silver, for payment of which cup he went to the goldsmith's house, and having payed for the silver, the gilt, and for the fashion, being without his clerk to carry it home, he prayed the goldsmith to lend him his man. By chance there were newly come to the city, two young men that were Romans, which ranged up and down the streets with ears upright, to view and mark everything done in the same, bearing about them counterfeit jewels and lingots, gilt of Saint Martin's touch, to deceive him that would play the fool to

buy them. One of them was called Liello and the other Dietiquo. These two merchants being at good leisure to wander the streets, beholding the passengers to and fro, by fortune espied the goldsmith's man, who (to set forth the workmanship and making of the cup) carried the same open. These gallants bearing a spite to the cup, more for the silver than for other malice, purposed to invent some sleight to get the cup, and afar off with sly pace, followed the goldsmith's man, of whom they craftily enquired of the owner of the cup, and where he had left Master Florien. When they had concluded upon their enterprise, Liello (the finest boy of them both) went straight to buy a lamprey of great price, and hiding the same under his cloak, repaired directly to Master Doctor's house, where finding his wife of semblable wit and behaviour that her husband was, with unshamefast face and like grace, said unto her : "Mistress, Master Florien your husband hath sent you a fish, and prayeth you to dress it and to make dinner ready, because he bringeth a company of other doctors with him : in the mean time he requireth you, to return unto him the cup again, which he sent you this morning by the goldsmith's man, because he had forgotten to stamp his arms upon it. The woman receiving the fish, frankly delivered him the cup, and went about to prepare dinner. Liello which hunted after gain but better caught his prey hied him apace and conveyed himself with speed to the house of one of his countrymen, and there rejoiced with his companion, attending for the coming of the roister Dietiquo, who tarried in the town, waiting and viewing what pursuit was made

after his fellow. Soon after Master Florien returned to his house and finding his dinner more delicate than it was wont to be, marvelled, and asked his wife who was at all that cost. His wife very scornfully answered : “ Why sir, have you forgotten that you sent me word this morning that you would bring home with you divers gentlemen to dinner ? ” “ What ” (quoth the doctor) “ I think you be a fool.” “ I am not ” (said she) “ and for better witness you sent me this fish, that I would you had been better advised before you had bestowed such cost.” “ I assure thee : ” quoth he, “ I sent thee no fish, but belike it was some foolish knave that had forgotten his errand and mistaken the house : but howsoever it was, wife, we at this time will be content to fare well, at other men’s charge.” “ Why sir ” (said his wife) “ call yourself to better remembrance, for he that brought the lamprey, came to me for your cup, by this token that you would have your arms engraven upon the same.” At those words the poor doctor, after he had discharged three or four cannons laden with hail shot of scolding words went out into the street, running hither and thither demanding of all them he met, if they saw none carry a lamprey home to his house. And you would have said if you had seen the doctor with his hood hanging at one side, that he had been out of his wits. Dietiquo stood still in a corner, and beheld the doctor’s frantic order and albeit that he was sure the stealing of the cup by Liello his companion was impossible to be known, yet being sorry that the lamprey cost so much, determined also to play his part, and seeing the doctor stayed from making further complaints and

pursuit, he went home to the doctor's house, where smiling with a good grace and bold countenance said unto his wife : " Mistress Doctor, good news, the cup is found, one whom you know caused the same to be done in sport to bring your husband Master Florien in a choler, who now is amongst divers of his friends jesting at the pleasant deceit, and hath sent me hither to fetch their dinner, wherein they pray you to remember the lamprey, and to come yourself to take part of the same, because they purpose to be merry." The woman joyful of those news began somewhat to complain of the grief which she had taken for loss of the cup, and delivered to Dietiquo the roasted lamprey with the sauce, between two platters who incontinently hid the same under his cloak, and with so much speed as he could, went to seek out his companion Liello, and their countrymen, which all that while had tarried for him : and God knoweth whether those good fellows did laugh and mock the poor doctor, and his wife or not, and when she had made herself gay and trim to go eat part of the lamprey, as she was going out she met Master Florien looking loweringly upon the matter, to whom she said (smiling like a frumenty pot) " How now, sir, come they hither to dinner ? I have sent you that lamprey ready dressed." Then Master Doctor after fair talk, began to discharge his double cannons, calling his wife whore, bitch, and beast, and understanding that he was twice beguiled and could not tell by whom, for spite and despair he tore off his beard and the hair of his head, which bruited and known in the city, the jesters and pleasant fellows bent themselves to laugh, and devise pastime at the poor beguiled doctor and his wife.

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